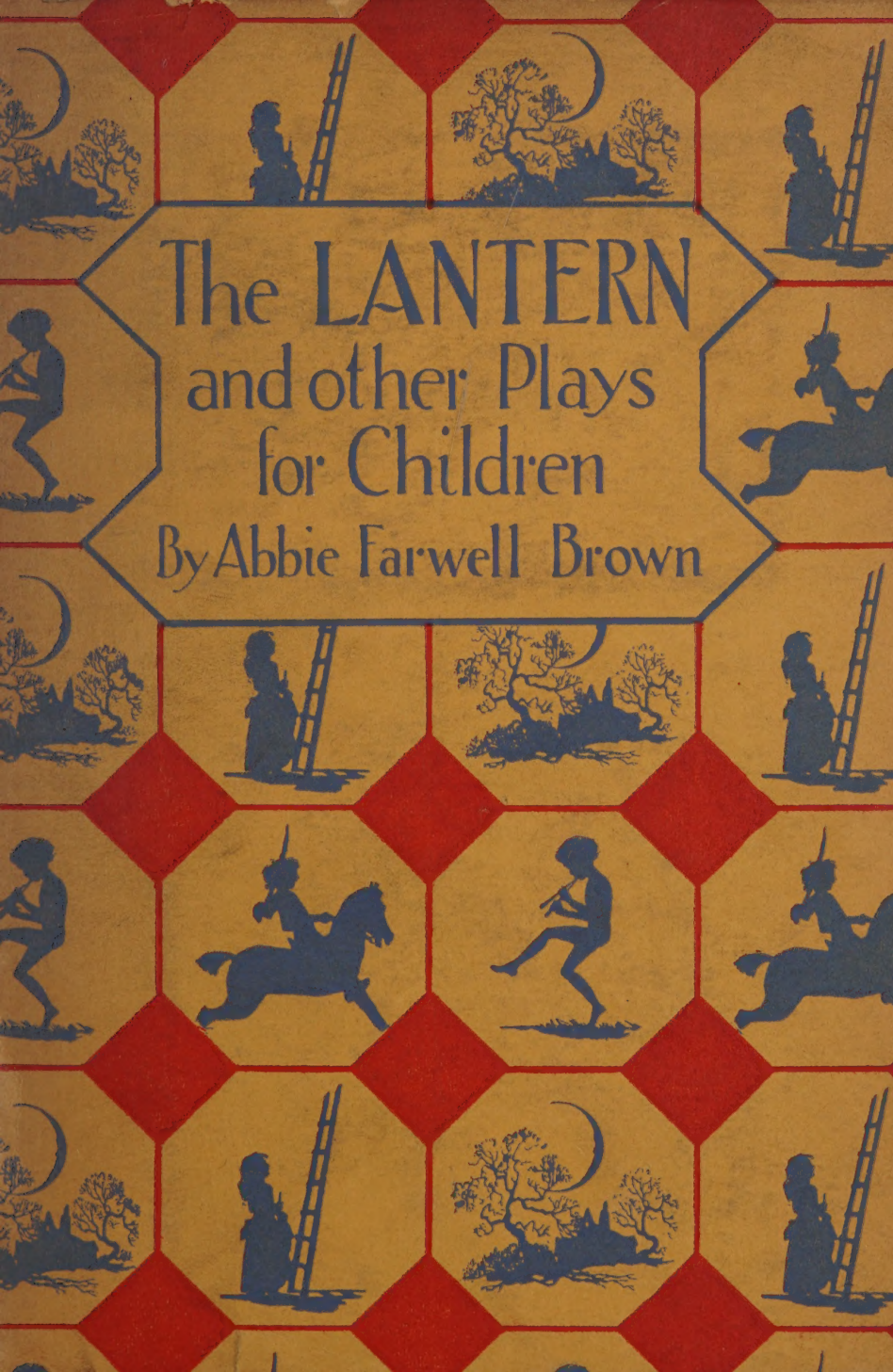


The LANTERN  
and other Plays  
for Children  
By Abbie Farwell Brown



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## THE LANTERN

And Other Plays for Children

*By Abbie Farwell Brown*

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FROM the literary material left by Miss Brown has been gathered a book of plays for children that will be welcomed by all who like Miss Brown's delightful stories and verse for young people, and that will provide most attractive dramatic texts for those who want charming little plays.

Included in the volume are 'The Lantern,' a thrilling play of Revolutionary times; 'Rhœcus: A Masque,' a delightful nature play in which fauns, oreads, and nymphs appear; 'The Wishing Moon,' a highly fanciful play dealing with fairies and nature sprites; and 'The Little Shadows,' a Christmas play.

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and other Plays  
for Children  
By Abbie Farwell Brown





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**THE LANTERN**  
*And Other Plays for Children*





# The Lantern

*And Other Plays for Children*

BY

ABBIE FARWELL BROWN



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  
*The Riverside Press Cambridge*  
1928

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*The Riverside Press*

CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

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THE LANTERN  
A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

## NOTE

While not founded upon history, the spirit of the little play is true to New England at the time of the Revolution. In a certain New England village there is historical record of a spontaneous stampede of the children from terror of the Redcoats, who were actually nowhere near at the time.



# THE LANTERN

*Time:* American Revolution.

*Place:* A New England seaboard hamlet, controlled by British troops.

*Scene:* Kitchen of a sea-captain's cottage at the head of a rock-strewn cove.

Act I. Evening. Act II. Early morning of the following day.

## CHARACTERS

### IN ACT I

MRS. BRACKETT, *wife of the Captain*

BARBARA BRACKETT, *aged 13*

DEB BRACKETT, *aged 10*

TIM BRACKETT, *aged 7*

JACK BRACKETT, *aged 12*

BEN, *aged 8*

ALICE, *aged 9*

} *her children*

} *their cousins*

WAT ROE, *a Tory spy*

SLINK, *another spy*

### IN ACT II

*British officer*

CAPTAIN DAVE BRACKETT

## THE GENERAL

*Continental soldiers**Sailors**Two Redcoats**Characters of Act I**Neighbor children ad lib.*

*The scene is a typical old New England kitchen. There is a door in centre back, the front door. Doors in R. and L. wall, respectively to bedroom and pantry. Windows R. and L. of front door. Small diamond-shaped window high in wall over front door. Fireplace R. C. Cupboard in corner beside pantry door. Front, beside fireplace, huge green sea-chest. Supper-table set in centre of room, half cleared of old china, etc. Lighted candle in brass stick on table. Six split-bottom chairs about the wall. Tall ladder leans against the wall, L. On shelf above fireplace a candle-lantern, unlighted, a large pink conch shell, branch of coral, a telescope, binoculars, etc. Sea-pictures on the wall, a ship in a rack, a flintlock on two pegs; banjo clock set at about seven. Tinder box on table. Box of candles in cupboard, knitting work on mantel.*

# THE LANTERN

## ACT I

*It is just after tea-time of a spring day, in Captain Brackett's cottage. Mrs. Brackett, assisted by her two daughters Barbara and Deb, with their cousin Alice, is clearing away the tea things, which they place in the cupboard and pantry, going back and forth. Tim and Ben are playing on the floor in front of stage near the sea-chest, rigging the sails of a toy ship.*

MRS. BRACKETT

*(To Alice who has a pile of plates in her hand)*

Yes, Alice, put those in the cupboard.

ALICE

*(Going to cupboard)*

Right here, Auntie?

DEB

Yes, Alice, they live side by side with the cups and saucers, see?

*(Arranges cups and saucers.)*



BARBARA

*(Coming in from pantry)*

There, the dishes are all washed, Mother.  
What next?

*(She folds up the tablecloth and puts it in the cupboard, then moves about, tidying the room, straightening the chairs, etc. Alice and Deb play cat's cradle in corner, L., with piece of string. Mrs. Brackett stands looking out of window, R.)*

TIM

No, that isn't right, Ben. You fix the halliards so. *(Takes ship.)*

BEN

Yes, 'tis right, Tim. You just ask Jacky when he comes.

TIM

I will ask Jacky. He knows almost as much about a boat as Father does. Mother, why doesn't Jacky come? He hasn't had supper, has he?

MRS. BRACKETT

*(Turning from window anxiously)*

No. I don't see why Jack is so late. He

has been gone a long time. What time is it, Barbara?

BARBARA

*(Holding candle up towards the clock)*

Seven o'clock, Mother. Don't worry. You know Jacky had a long way to go (*significantly*).

MRS. BRACKETT

I know, Barbara. Five miles at least, across country. I wish he would get back. It is going to be a black night. I can hardly see the water in the cove (*straining her eyes out of the window*). It's a bad night for sailors along our rocky coast.

*(She sighs, crosses to R., takes knitting work from mantel and begins to knit, standing in front of fire.)*

DEB

Where's Jacky gone, Mother? Do you expect him to bring a letter to-night? It is about time for Father to be sailing home, isn't it, Mother?

MRS. BRACKETT

*(Turning to Deb and laying finger on lips)*

Sh! Don't talk so loud, Deb. Haven't I

warned you not to talk about Father's return until he gets here? Don't speak of it anywhere, ever! We never know who may be listening nowadays. We never know who may be our friends, and who are not. The town is full of Tory spies, they say.

BARBARA

*(Taking her knitting from the cupboard and sitting in a chair at back, R. Speaks low)*

Yes, Mother. And they say the Redcoats are watching the harbor all the time so that no boat can go out or come in without being seen and captured.

TIM

*(Chanting absent-mindedly)*

The Redcoats! The Redcoats! The town is full of Redcoats.

ALICE

They took away our cow yesterday, Auntie. And to-day they took the old horse.

BEN

*(Fearfully)*

Maybe they've caught Jacky, Tim! Maybe



they'll eat him up. The Redcoats do eat children, you know.

BARBARA

Nonsense!

ALICE

Oh, do they, Ben? I'm scared, Auntie!

DEB

*(Impulsively)*

Well, Mother, they can watch all they like. But Father could slip in any time without their knowing it, couldn't he, Mother, to the secret landing?

MRS. BRACKETT

Sh! *(Pointing to boys who have left their boat and are fumbling with the fastenings of the sea-chest.)* Be careful, Deb. Little pitchers have big ears, you know.

TIM

The Redcoats can't have my boat. I'll hide it in the chest. *(Opens chest.)* See, it's empty. Let's play it's a boat.

*(The two boys play with the chest, opening and closing it, jumping in and out, pretending to row, etc.)*

ALICE

The Redcoats can have everything they want. They have guns and cannon and swords and pistols.

BEN

They have stolen the town hall and the post office and the church. They are going to kill everybody. Wat Roe told me so.

MRS. BRACKETT

Hush, Ben. You don't know what you are talking about.

DEB

Oh, I hope nothing has happened to Jacky. I hope the Redcoats haven't caught him.

ALICE

Oh, so do I!

BARBARA

*(Going to door and peering out eagerly)*

I thought I heard him. *(Listening.)* No. Oh, I wish you had let me go, Mother. How I wish I were a boy! Then I could do something brave for Father and the Colony. Mother, I could have gone to the secret post

office just as well as Jacky. I know I could. And I'd have got home sooner. I wouldn't stop a minute on the way.

*(She crosses to L. and kneels in front of fire.)*

MRS. BRACKETT

Perhaps so, Daughter. But it was a boy's errand in war-time. Jacky can run faster than you, and being a boy they wouldn't notice him so much. Never mind, Barbara. Your chance may come yet. Sometimes girls are called to be as brave as men. I know I could trust you to do your duty when the time comes, my daughter.

DEB

*(Teasingly)*

She can knit stockings for the soldiers, can't you, Barbara?

ALICE

She knits better than any of us, Deb, so now!

BARBARA

*(Listening)*

Hark! I do hear somebody coming.

TIM

*(Running to door with Ben at his heels)*

Yes. I hear it too. I guess it's Jack. Yes, I hear him running over the rocks. It is Jacky!

WOMEN

*(Eagerly)*

Oh!

*(All spring to their feet and stand expectant. Barbara runs to door, and stands peering over little boys' shoulders.)**(Enter Jack, panting and out of breath. He gives a letter to Mrs. Brackett)*

JACK

Here's the letter, Mother. Father sent it by Ned Barker yesterday. It is marked 'Immediate.' Ned galloped on horseback all the way from Rivermouth to meet me, and I galloped on foot most of the way home. Whew! I'm hungry.

MRS. BRACKETT

*(Taking letter eagerly)*

'Immediate'! It must be something very important.



JACK

Mother, I've been followed most of the way. I'm sure of it. There was some one dodging along close behind me through the woods. But it was so dark I couldn't see who it was.

BARBARA

Oh, Jacky! That must have been exciting. I wish it could have happened to me. I do!

JACK

Humph! You think that was fun, do you? Well, you are welcome! It is not a pleasant feeling, I can tell you, to be followed in the dark by something you can't see.

DEB

Oh, Jack! How horrid!

ALICE

Oh, Jack, how brave you are!

TIM AND BEN TOGETHER

Was it the Redcoats, Jacky?

MRS. BRACKETT

Followed! Why, Jacky, I can't believe that you were really followed. No one suspects you. You just imagined it, I am sure.

JACK

No, indeed I didn't, Mother. It was real. But my! I'm hungry. Got to get something to eat.

*(Exit Jack to pantry, followed by Tim and Ben.)*

BARBARA

*(Looking over her mother's shoulder, who sits by the table to use the candle-light)*

What does the letter say, Mother?

MRS. BRACKETT

*(Reading)*

It is a very short letter from your father. Listen: 'First dark night. Hang the lantern as usual. Precious cargo. Careful!' That is all.

DEB

'Precious cargo.' What does that mean, Mother?

ALICE

Is Uncle bringing home a treasure from China, Auntie?

MRS. BRACKETT

Sh! children. I cannot guess what it means. Something precious which the Redcoats may

try to take away from him, so he must land it secretly, in the dark. (*Reading letter again.*) 'First dark night.' (*Glances at window.*) That means to-night, perhaps. It's dark enough, surely. Father may come to-night. We must be ready.

BARBARA

Oh, how I long to see Father!

(*Reënter Jack with little boys, munching*)

JACK

Father coming home? So that's the news. I'm glad.

DEB

(*Clapping hands*)

Yes, Father's coming home! Father's coming home!

MRS. BRACKETT

Sh! children. Must I keep warning you? Now I must hide this note somewhere. (*She looks along mantel, takes conch shell.*) See, girls, I'll put it in the pink shell for safety.

(*Puts letter in shell.*)

TIM

(*Dancing about and singing carelessly*)

In the pink shell! In the pink shell! She's put the letter in the pink shell.

JACK

*(Clapping a hand over Tim's mouth and pulling him down beside him on the sea-chest)*

Sh! You young parrot! I'll have to cage you.

BARBARA

*(Moving to the mantel and taking the lantern into her hands)*

Here is the lantern, Mother.

MRS. BRACKETT

Yes. Is the lantern quite ready, Barbara? We must keep it burning in the window all night long, to guide Father up the cove, or he may run on the rocks.

BARBARA

Yes. Father's little lighthouse is quite ready. I put the longest candle I could find in it yesterday. I'll get some extra ones ready, and have the tinder box at hand in case it should blow out. *(She goes to cupboard, returns with box of candles and tinder box, which she places on table. Lights candle-lantern from the candle on the table, stands centre holding lantern.)* Who will keep watch, Mother?



MRS. BRACKETT

I shall, of course.

DEB

Let me, Mother.

JACK

I will, Mother.

TIM

Me! Me!

*(Jumping up and down.)*

MRS. BRACKETT

I couldn't trust any one but Barbara. I suspect she is the only one who wouldn't go to sleep. But I shall do the watching myself.

BARBARA

Shall I hang the lantern now, Mother?

*(Glancing up at small window.)*

JACK

No, let me hang it. I can climb better than Barbara. Girls can't climb ladders, they are so clumsy.

*(He sets the ladder in place under the little window.)*

BARBARA

Yes, I can do it — can't I, Mother?

MRS. BRACKETT

Better let your brother do it, Barbara. It is easier for a boy.

BARBARA

No, please let me. I want so much to help Father. *(She jealously holds the lantern away from Jack, who holds out his hand for it. Finally she impulsively gives it up.)* Very well, Jack! If Mother says so. I don't care.

JACK

*(Takes the lantern proudly, climbs easily and hangs it on a nail in the window.)*

There you are!

BEN

What's the lantern lighted for, Auntie? Is it to keep Uncle Dave from sailing on the rocks?

TIM

Yes, it is! Yes, it is!

*(Both boys jump up and down excitedly.)*

MRS. BRACKETT

Sh! Don't talk so loud. Sh!

*(In midst of exclamation a tap is heard on the door. All stand aghast and silent.)*

TIM

*(Whispering)*

The Redcoats! Oh, Mother, it's the Redcoats!

BEN

I want to go home to my own father's house!

ALICE

I don't want the Redcoats to eat me.

JACK

*(Making a motion to take down the flintlock musket from the wall)*

Shall I shoot them, Mother?

MRS. BRACKETT

*(Collecting herself)*

Move the ladder back, quick, Jack! *(Jack moves the ladder to its first position.)* Come in!

*(Enter Wat Roe, slouchily, glancing quickly about the place. He spies the lantern and eyes it fixedly)*

WAT

Good-evenin', folks!

JACK

Wat! Why, it's Wat Roe!

WAT

Yes, it's only me. Surprised, I guess, ain't ye?

MRS. BRACKETT

Neighbor Wat Roe, glad to see you. What brings you here?

JACK

Why, Wat, it must have been you who were following me all the time. I thought it was a Redcoat. (*Laughing.*) Why didn't you speak?

WAT

Ha, ha! That's good. Me a Redcoat! Confound 'em, I say! 'Taxation without representation is tyranny.' That's it. Ha, ha! No, I wa'n't exactly follerin' ye, Jack. Jest bound for the same place, ye see.

MRS. BRACKETT

Yes. Well, what is your errand, Wat? I hope there's nothing of bad news up your way?

WAT

(*Scratching his head*)

News? Not exactly. But I had an errand



to ye. Say, Mis' Brackett, they want you over to Simms's right away, if you can come. Mis' Simms is took real sick again. She says she knows she can count on you to help her.

MRS. BRACKETT

*(Pityingly)*

Count on me, of course she can! Poor Mrs. Simms! I'm sorry she is sick again. I'll go right along. Deb, you get my bag. Barbara, my bonnet and shawl. *(Exit Deb, L.)*

BARBARA

*(In a low tone)*

Mother! Can you go to-night?

WAT

*(Looking up suspiciously)*

Eh, what? What's that you say?

MRS. BRACKETT

*(To Barbara, hesitating)*

Oh, yes, Barbara. Yes, I must go. Mrs. Simms's spells are very bad. She'll need me. But I will leave the house and everything in your charge, Barbara. I can trust you, my daughter, to do whatever there is to do.

BARBARA

Yes, Mother. *(Exit to bedroom.)*

*(Enter Deb with a reticule which she hands  
her mother)*

TIM

Oh, where are you going, Mother? I don't want you to go away!

DEB

Suppose the Redcoats come, Mother. Don't go!

*(Reënter Barbara with bonnet and shawl  
which she helps put on her mother)*

MRS. BRACKETT

I must go, children. Barbara and Jack will take care of you. Nothing will happen, I am sure — nothing bad, at least. I shall be back in the morning early.

JACK

I'll take care of them, Mother. I'll shoot the Redcoats.

MRS. BRACKETT

Yes, Jacky. *(Kisses the younger children.)*  
You coming along, Wat Roe?

WAT

Me? Oh, I guess I'll stop a minute with the children, and get warmed up by your fire. My! It's a dreadful dark, cold night, and I'm all tuckered out. You'd better take along a lantern, Mis' Brackett. Shall I get that one down for ye? *(Points up at the lantern.)*

MRS. BRACKETT

*(Hastily)*

No, no, Wat! But I do need a lantern, don't I? But I believe there's one in the cupboard that is easier to reach. Barbara, will you get it for me, please?

BARBARA

*(Going to cupboard and bringing out small lantern)*

Yes, Mother. Here's the little one. It's the only other lantern there is.

*(Lights it at table and hands it to Mrs. Brackett.)*

MRS. BRACKETT

Thank you, dear. Now good-bye. *(Pauses at door to say:)* God keep you from all harm, my darlings. I trust you, Daughter.

ALL

Good-bye, Mother. Good-bye, Auntie.

*(Exit Mrs. Brackett.)*

WAT

*(Rubbing his hands in front of fire)*

Well, now! Here we are all snug, ain't we?  
What's the news down this way, Jack?

JACK

*(Cautiously)*

No news to speak of, Wat.

WAT

The miserable Redcoats still hang about, don't they? I wish some good patriots would get together and drive them all out, don't you? I'm kinder sick of seein' them around. Why doesn't General Washington do something about it, if he's so smart?

BARBARA

General Washington will do something about it when he gets ready, Wat Roe.

WAT

Oho! You're a good Patriot, ain't ye, young one? Say, when do you expect your father home, hey? *(Whispering.)* They can't

anybody get in or out of the harbor with the Redcoats spyin' all the time, can they? Kinder bad for your father, ain't it? Most time for him to be comin' home, too.

TIM

*(Carelessly, as he plays with the boat)*

Father's coming home. His letter's in the pink shell, in the pink shell.

BARBARA

*(Covering his mouth hastily, in a low tone)*

Sh! Tim. Sh!

WAT

*(Listening sily)*

No news from him, eh? I thought the lantern might have something to do with him, eh? *(Silence in the cottage. Wat looks about sily. Grins.)* Oho!

BARBARA

We often hang the lantern there — for a guide.

WAT

Ah, hum! Of course! A little lighthouse, eh? Not for the Redcoats? Ha, ha! No, no! — *(Whispering meaningly:)* Say, young ones, I



see a lot of Redcoats in the woods as I come along.

CHILDREN

*(Horror-struck)*

Oh, no! Oh, Wat! What? Where?

*(They gather around him. Tim and Ben  
cling to his knees.)*

WAT

Great, big, dreadful giants with glaring eyes and big teeth, ready to eat up children. They had pistols in their belts and swords in their hands. There must have been a thousand of them, red as blood.

CHILDREN

Oh! Oh, Wat!

JACK

Honest, Wat? Do you mean you saw them?

WAT

Mean it? 'Course I do. Why should I lie to you? I'm no confounded Tory, am I?

BARBARA

Where were they, Wat? Down by the shore?

WAT

In the woods, close by this house. Hark!  
Don't I hear something?

CHILDREN

Oh! Oh!           *(They huddle around Wat.)*

BARBARA

I don't hear anything, do you, Jack?

JACK

Yes, I think I do. I'm sure I do. Tramping  
feet!

WAT

That's it. Lots of tramping feet. A whole  
army. They're coming, the Redcoats are  
coming!

*(Rises, feigning terror. Manages to extin-  
guish the candle. Room in near dark-  
ness.)*

CHILDREN

*(Running wildly about)*

Oh, it's dark! Oh, Wat. What shall we do?  
What shall we do, Jack? Barbara! What  
shall we do?

BEN

I want to go home. I want my mother!

WAT

Yes, that's an idea! Ben, Alice, children, we'll all run along to your Aunt's. We'll be safe enough there, up on the hill. Come on, young 'uns. Come on! *(Runs out.)*

JACK

Come on, Barbara! Deb, Tim. I'll take care of you. Let's follow Wat before it is too late and the Redcoats come.

*(He rushes out, followed by all but Barbara.)*

BARBARA

Jack! *(Whispering.)* You forget — Father — the lantern! We must keep it burning all night or he will be wrecked. Jack! Jack, don't go! Don't leave me. I can't go, for Mother left me in charge. — They're gone! *(She runs distractedly around.)* Oh, if I could only hide somewhere till the Redcoats go away. Where shall I hide? There is the sea-chest. It is empty. I'll get in there.

*(Opens chest and climbs in, pulling the cover almost shut. In a few moments, reënter Wat, laughing uproariously. He strides to table and striking tinder box relights candle.)*

WAT

Ha, ha! Well, I gave 'em a scare, sure enough. They're running yet. Redcoats! Ha, ha! Now let's see about that letter. Tim said — let me see — Tim said, 'Father's letter is in the pink shell.' Pink shell? Pink shell? — ah, there it is. (*Discovers letter in the pink shell on mantel by aid of candle. Reads it, leaning against the mantel. Emits a shrill whistle.*) Whew! So! 'Precious cargo!' That interests me! (*Goes to door and whistles three times shrilly on his fingers.*) Come on, old Slink. Now about the lantern. What does it say about the lantern? (*Reads letter.*) 'Hang the lantern as usual.' So, ho! We'll fix that.

(*Places ladder against the wall under window, climbs agilely, unfastens lantern from hook, descends and places it on the table.*)

(*Enter Slink, a disreputable figure in rags.*)

SLINK

(*Sulkily, in a coarse voice*)

Hello, Wat. What you want of me? What you up to now? Where's everybody?

(*Looking around cottage.*)

WAT

Ah! Good business, Slink, old spy! I've got rid of the old mother hen and her whole brood of chicks. Shoo! Scared 'em to death with tales of Red Fox. My, how they ran! But look, the old cock is on his way here. We must catch him, with the worm in his bill.

SLINK

What yer mean, Matey? Talk English, will yer, or I can't foller yer nohow. I'm perticuler about my speech, I be.

WAT

Hold hard, then. Listen: Cap'n Brackett's what they call a Continental Patriot, confound him! You and I know what we think of that business.

SLINK

*(Growling)*

Dirty rebels, I calls 'em.

WAT

Well, Jack brought a letter to-night. I followed him from Hangman's Hill where he got it of Ned Barker — another rebel. There's some game afoot. Listen to what that letter



said: 'First dark night. Hang the lantern as usual' — here it is, Slink — 'Precious cargo. Careful.' — Do you mind that, Slink? 'Precious cargo.'

SLINK

Aye, aye! 'Precious cargo.' What does that mean, Matey?

WAT

Can't say, Slink. Maybe some contraband cargo that the Cap'n won't pay duty on to his lawful King. Maybe tea. Maybe gold. Maybe rum. Maybe something better still! Say, why don't the pair of us git that there cargo for ourselves, Slink?

SLINK

Right, Matey. Just you and me — not the rest of the Redcoats?

WAT

Just you and me. We'll tell our friends the Lobsters afterwards, old boy; after we have taken our fair share of the precious cargo. We'll hand them over Cap'n and crew as prisoners of war, with the wreck of the bark

Genevieve. Say, old spy, here's my plan.

*(A noise from the sea-chest makes them both start.)*

WAT

Sh! What's that?

SLINK

I heard a noise — a squeak, from over there. *(Points to chest.)*

WAT

*(Seizing candle, and going to look)*

I don't see anything.

SLINK

*(Seizing lantern and following)*

Maybe it's a rat. *(Fumbles along floor, goes behind chest.)* I know it was in this corner.

WAT

It must have been a rat. *(Goes back to table, on edge of which he sits.)* Now, listen. You see, they lighted that lantern and hung it up there to guide Cap'n Brackett off the rocks. It's their reg'lar signal, I guess. The bay is so full of rocks he couldn't git to this here little cove safe any other way.

SLINK

Jest so, Matey. What then?

WAT

I'll tell yer what then! In two shakes of a lamb's tail, we'll sneak down the shore a bit toward where our friends the Lobsters are watching. We'll hang that there lantern on top of a pole out on them rocks behind Dead Man's Reef where there's been so many wrecks.

SLINK

Good, Matey. We'll do that. Then what?

WAT

The night is so black the Cap'n can't see nothin'. He'll be lookin' for his little light-house up here, he, he! And smash! he'll go on them rocks!

SLINK

He, he! (*Noise from the chest again. Both men jump.*) That rat again!

WAT

Confound that rat!

SLINK

*(Seizing poker)*

I'll finish him this time. I vow! He's inside the Cap'n's sea-chest.

*(Goes to chest and lays hand on it as if to open it.)*

WAT

Oh, if he's in there he's safe enough. Let him alone. He'll smother to death. We ain't got time to bother with him.

SLINK

No, Matey, we ain't, that's a fact. I'll just shut that chest up tight and finish him.  
*(Closes chest. Sits on it, rubbing his hands.)*  
Go on, Matey. It's a grand plot.

WAT

Well, there's no time to lose. He may be sailin' along shore this minute. We've got a lot to do before mornin'. When he's on them rocks nothin' can save him. He's in our hands, and the precious cargo is ours. Then we'll go and tell the Redcoats about the wreck, and let them capture the survivors, if there be any. And we'll be paid handsome for our service, into the bargain. See, old spy?

## SLINK

I see. Matey, you're a regular howler, you are. Come on. I want to git my fingers on that there precious cargo. I guess that rat's good and dead by now, or will be soon. (*Knocks on the chest as he rises.*) Good-night, Rat!

## WAT

(*Blowing out candle*)

You bring along the lantern, Slink. I'll lock up behind so as to take no chances of their coming back.

(*Exit Slink with lantern. Wat strides after him to door. Exit. Sound of locking door on outside with loud noise. Silence for a few minutes. Presently lid of chest slowly rises. Barbara thrusts out arm feebly.*)

## BARBARA

(*In a weak voice*)

Mother! Where am I? (*Sits up, dazed.*) Oh! I can hardly breathe. Mother! How dark it is. The candle is out. Where is the lantern? (*Climbs out of chest, stands back to audience, C.*) It's gone! Oh, Father's boat



will go on the rocks! He will be drowned! That wicked Wat's plan — I heard it. I will light the candle. (*Lights candle on table.*) Where is the lantern? Oh, Wat has taken it away. (*Runs to door, tries it.*) I am locked in. What shall I do? I must be quick. (*Takes candle and looks wildly about in cupboard, pantry, on mantel.*) There is no lantern in the house. Only candles. But I must keep the light burning all night in the window for Father. Father's little lighthouse must not fail him. There's no ledge up there to stand a candle on. What shall I do? — There is only one way. I must hold it in my hand all night, and light a fresh one when that goes out. (*Fills apron with candles.*) I shall have to be Father's lighthouse myself. Oh, Father in Heaven! Give me strength to be a little lantern for my dear father on earth!

*(With the lighted candle in one hand and apron full of candles painfully held, she climbs the ladder to the window, and steadies herself on the top round. Then she stands with arm stretched painfully up over her head, so that the candle comes to the right height in the window, much*

*in the attitude of 'Liberty Enlightening the World.')*

## CURTAIN ON ACT I

## ACT II

*Scene same as for Act I. Curtain rising discovers Barbara, standing on top of ladder as when the curtain fell, in attitude of exhaustion, her arm above her head, still holding a half-burned candle. She is very pale and tired. It is early morning. Gray dawn is just beginning to light the room. It grows gradually brighter, as the act progresses.*

BARBARA

*(Wearily)*

Oh, dear! Isn't it morning yet? I believe it is growing brighter. Soon I can put out the candle and come down. I am so tired. Oh, I hope Father is safe!

*(Loud knocking at the door.)*

CHILDREN

*(Outside, crying)*

Barbara! Are you in there?

BARBARA

*(In a faint voice)*

Yes, I'm in here. I'm locked in. Open the door.

CHILDREN

*(Outside)*

Barbara! Barbara! You there? Who locked the door? Where is the key? Barbara!

JACK'S VOICE

*(Outside)*

Barbara, was it you kept the lantern burning all night? Barbara! Open the door!

BARBARA

I can't make you hear, my voice is so faint. The door is locked. Can't you open it?

CHILDREN

*(Outside)*

Barbara! It is morning and the candle is still burning. Where are you? Where is Father?

BARBARA

Yes, it is morning. I can put out the candle now. *(Blows out candle. Prepares stiffly to descend ladder.)* I am coming down.

CHILDREN

*(Outside)*

Oh, here's Mother. Here comes Mother.  
Mother! Mother! .

*(Voices heard talking outside.)*

BARBARA

*(Faintly)*

Mother! Mother!

*(She descends ladder and moves very  
slowly and weakly towards the door.)*

MOTHER

*(Outside, wildly)*

Barbara! Barbara! My daughter, are you  
there? You must be there. You would not  
leave your post, I know. Speak to me!

BARBARA

*(Near door, speaking very faintly)*

Mother! Here I am!

MOTHER

*(Outside)*

I cannot hear a sound. She cannot be there.  
But where can she be?

*(Voices outside fade gradually away.)*

## THE LANTERN

BARBARA

*(Speaking with increasing difficulty)*

Mother! Do not go away! *(Beats feebly on door with hands.)* I am so tired and dizzy. *(Sobs.)* Oh, they are all gone. Where can Father be? What shall I do. Father! —

*(Falls fainting in front of door.)*

*(Tramp of feet and sound of voices outside.  
Heavy knocking on door.)*

MAN'S VOICE

Open the door! *(Rattling of latch. Silence.)*

ANOTHER MAN'S VOICE

Where's the key? Open the door.

THIRD MAN'S VOICE

Have you lost the key? Oh, you have, have you? Well, then, break down the door and be quick about it.

*(Sound of blows. Door bursts open. Enter British officer with two Redcoats, followed by Wat and Slink, carrying lantern. They stand amazed on seeing Barbara.)*

OFFICER

Hello! Who's this?

WAT

The little gal! The Cap'n's darter!

OFFICER

*(Bending over her)*

Is she hurt? No, I think she has fainted.  
Bring her over here to this chest.

*(Redcoats lift Barbara to the sea-chest.)*

WAT

*(To Slink)*

How did she get here?

BARBARA

*(Opening her eyes, looks around with horror)*

The Redcoats!

WAT

*(Gruffly)*

Yes, the Redcoats in earnest this time. So  
ho, Missie! You give me the slip, did you?

*(Seizes her roughly by the wrist.)*

OFFICER

Come, Wat. Don't scare the child. She is  
still weak. Leave her to me. *(Turns to Bar-  
bara, who sits up. He leans against the mantel.  
The Redcoats stand one on either side of the  
door. Wat sits on table, Slink leans against*



*ladder.*) What does this mean, girl? How came you to be locked in here alone?

BARBARA

*(Pointing to Wat)*

He locked me in. I know about Wat Roe now. He is a wicked spy. He's a cheat and a coward. He tried to frighten us all.

WAT

Hold on! I never knew she was here, Cap'n. I thought the children all ran out.

OFFICER

How did you escape notice, pray?

BARBARA

I hid in this sea-chest.

*(Wat and Slink give an exclamation.)*

SLINK

The rat! She was the rat!

WAT

Oho! So that was how you did it? You must have overheard all I said to Slink, you little limb of an eavesdropper! Why weren't you smothered?

SLINK

*(Shaking fist)*

You little rat —

OFFICER

That's enough, you two. *(To Barbara.)*  
Why didn't you run away with the rest of  
the children, eh? Why did you hide here, my  
girl?

BARBARA

*(Biting her lips)*

I — I couldn't leave, Sir.

OFFICER

*(Sharply)*

Why not? Weren't you afraid?

BARBARA

Yes, I was afraid. But I couldn't leave.

OFFICER

*(Impatiently)*

Well, why not? Come, come! You had  
better tell me.

BARBARA

I can't tell you, Sir.

OFFICER

You must tell me. I shall make you. (*Barbara clasps her hands and fastens her lips firmly.*) You won't tell me?

(*Barbara shakes her head slowly. Wat has been peering about the floor curiously.*)

WAT

(*Picking candle-stub from floor*)

Well, I can tell you, Cap'n. Here's the ends of a lot of candles on the floor under this ladder. See, the young minx has been holding up a light in this window all night. That's why our plan fell through. That's why we missed her father at the harbor.

BARBARA

Then Father is safe! Father is safe! He wasn't wrecked after all.

OFFICER

You don't mean to say that you stood on top of that ladder all night, holding up a candle at arm's length for a signal to your father?

BARBARA

There wasn't any other way.

OFFICER

My word! What did you do when the candle burned out?

BARBARA

I had others ready in my apron, Sir.

OFFICER

*(Going under ladder and counting candle-ends)*

One, two, three, four, five candle-ends.  
How long did you stand there, my girl?

BARBARA

Till just now, when it grew light. *(Gives a great sigh.)* Oh, me!

OFFICER

By Jove! You are a stout lass. If you were my daughter I should be proud enough of you. But since you are the child of my enemy, I must see that you are punished. You will have to come with me.

WAT

*(Uneasily)*

Aye, aye. She heard too many secrets, Cap'n, shut up in that sea-chest. Best shut up her mouth for good and all, Sir, or put her back in the chest and fasten her in for good.

Slink,\* we thought it was a rat! There's no good in rats, Sir. They got to be got rid of.

OFFICER

(*Sternly*)

Silence! British officers do not murder children of the enemy. Leave that to savages. You were a fool to blab your secrets in the rebels' house, Wat Roe. How much did you tell, I wonder. (*To Barbara.*) You will have to come along with us, my lass. We can't have you telling our secrets to the other rebels.

BARBARA

Oh, please, Sir! What can I do? I'm only a girl. They were planning to wreck my father.

OFFICER

For just a girl you have done pretty well already. It would be poor policy to leave such a good rebel as you where she can do more mischief. No, no, you will have to take the consequences of this little game of yours. — Hello!

(*Door opens suddenly. Captain Dave Brackett appears on threshold.*)

CAPTAIN

Ship ahoy!

BARBARA

Father!

*(She runs to him. He clasps her in his arms.)*

CAPTAIN

My little gal! What are the Redcoats doing to you, my lass?

*(Redcoats step between Captain and door, with bayonets pointed.)*

WAT

It is Cap'n Dave himself. Take him, Sir.

OFFICER

So this is Captain Brackett, the rebel conspirator, eh? Well, walk right into your own house, Captain. Make yourself quite at home. So you have walked into the trap after all — and by your own daughter's doings. Her lantern guided you, did it not? She was not helping so much as she thought, was she? Well, well. What a happy reunion!

CAPTAIN

Yes, I'm Cap'n Dave Brackett, so I am.  
*(To Barbara.)* My lass! Don't you be down-



hearted, dearie. You did your duty like a good one. I saw your lantern in the window, and it saved me from going on the rocks, yes, it did. You did just right, my girl. (*To Officer.*) So you were going to punish her, were you? Ha!

*(Slink and Wat whisper together aside.)*

WAT

Say, Cap'n Dave, what about the precious cargo you were bringing? Make him tell about that, Cap'n.

SLINK

Aye, aye! What about the precious cargo?

OFFICER

*(To Redcoats)*

Secure your prisoner, men.

*(Redcoats offer to capture Captain. He resists manfully.)*

CAPTAIN

*(Escaping and blowing his Captain's whistle shrilly.)*

Not so fast, not so fast, my hearties! Give me time, and I'll land that same precious cargo, and you can judge of its value for yourselves. Ahoy, there!

*(Blows a second time. In at the door burst four burly men in sailor's costume, armed with pistols and cutlasses, followed by half a dozen Continental soldiers in uniform, with muskets and fixed bayonets. They surround and overpower the officer, his Redcoats, and guard the door. Behind them a tall figure in Colonial hat, wrapped in a long military blue cloak which is drawn over his face, stands inconspicuous on the threshold.)*

WAT

Trapped! Trapped like rats in a trap.

SLINK

There's been too many rats here for us to-night, Wat.

OFFICER

I see I am powerless. I surrender. To whom shall I offer my sword? Is there any one among you who calls himself an officer?

THE SHROUDED FIGURE

You may hand it to me, Sir.

CAPTAIN

Aye, aye! Hand it to him, Cap'n.

OFFICER

*(To the Figure)*

And who are you, pray?

FIGURE

*(Throwing back his cloak)*

I am the General-in-Chief.

OFFICER

The Chief of the rebels!

BARBARA

Our General!

CAPTAIN

Aye, aye, 'tis my precious cargo, brought in my good ship Genevieve to aid the Patriot cause. We have outplayed you, Captain Red-coat! The Yankee sailor has been a little too much for you this time, I guess.

OFFICER

Wat, you have got us into a trap indeed, you rascal!

WAT

*(Cowering)*

I ain't done nothing, nothing at all.

BARBARA

He is a spy, Father. He and that other man. They are wicked spies!

GENERAL

*(To Continental soldiers)*

Seize those two men. Do not let them escape. I have no pity for spies.

*(Soldiers seize and bind the pair.)*

SLINK

The young rat has bitten us this time, Wat.

WAT

A child is worse than a rat for mischief.

*(They try to escape. Soldiers stop them.)*

GENERAL

I have no pity for men who frighten children. *(To soldiers.)* Take them away. *(Exit soldiers with Wat and Slink.)* We have circumvented you this time, Captain. Thanks to the clever scheme of Captain Brackett, we have come in behind the town and are now in a position to attack it and drive out your intruding garrison.

OFFICER

You win, General, this time.

CAPTAIN

We shall win in the end, too.

GENERAL

There is one other person to whom I believe

the Patriots owe gratitude for service rendered. I mean this young lady, your daughter, Captain Brackett.

BARBARA

Oh, General!

GENERAL

But before we thank her we must be kind. Her mother must be anxious to congratulate the brave daughter. Let her enter.

*(Exit sailor.)*

CAPTAIN

Yes, I am proud indeed of my little girl.

*(Noise outside. Reënter sailor escorting Mrs. Brackett, who runs to Barbara and embraces her.)*

MRS. BRACKETT

My daughter!

BARBARA

Mother!

MRS. BRACKETT

I knew I could trust you, Barbara! You stood at your post as Father's daughter should. You saved your father, my darling!

*(Noise outside. Other children rush in and embrace Barbara.)*

JACK

Barbara, you are a trump!

DEB

Oh, Barbara! We ran off and left you all alone.

TIM

And there weren't any Redcoats at all.

JACK

Wat Roe told a lie to us.

DEB

And we met Mother, and we all saw Father first, before you did.

MRS. BRACKETT

Sh! Children, you forget who is here!  
(*Curtseying.*) General, we beg your pardon  
for our bad manners. We were too eager.

CAPTAIN

(*Indulgently*)

Aye, aye, too eager! Too eager. That's it.

GENERAL

Not too eager, Madame, Captain Brackett.  
I feel with you. It is no wonder you are all  
proud of this girl of yours, and are eager to



embrace her. I myself long to salute the little heroine. What is her name, Madame?

MRS. BRACKETT

Barbara, General. Barbara Brackett.

GENERAL

Barbara, allow me the honor of saluting you. (*He kisses Barbara gravely on the cheek.*)

BARBARA

(*Curtseying modestly*)

Thank you, Sir. But I did nothing, really.

GENERAL

You held up that candle all night long, did you not?

BARBARA

Yes, Sir. Mother bade me keep it burning for Father's sake. I had to do it.

GENERAL

Yes. You did your duty, that is all. And in doing that you did your country a great service. Barbara, a great poet said once, 'How far that little candle throws its beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world.' I prophesy that your good deed will shine for many generations in this naughty world, my

Barbara. And long years hence children of another day will hear of it with applause.

TIM

*(Unable to restrain his emotion)*

Hurray!

JACK

*(Checking him)*

Sh! Tim, the General is speaking.

GENERAL

Don't silence him, my boy. Let us all give three cheers for our Barbara. Now, one, two, three —

ALL

Hip, hip, hurray! Barbara!

CAPTAIN

*(Embracing Barbara)*

My little lantern!

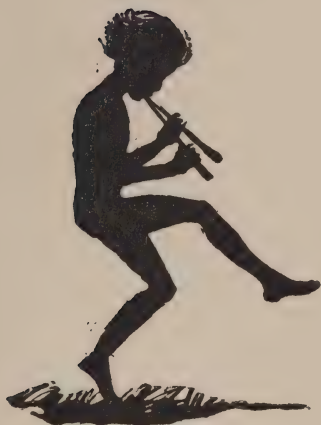
GENERAL

Our little lantern. *(Picking up candle-end from table.)* Let me keep this, friends, to show our brother Patriots what one little girl did for her country. It is not only the grown people but the children. It is not only the big men but the little women who are the strength

of our America. Sometimes, dear Barbara, a little lantern is equal to a big lighthouse.

*(In one hand the General holds up the candle-end, and takes Barbara's hand with the other, bowing low to her. Father and mother stand behind them. The children make a circle and dance around.)*

CURTAIN ON ACT II



RHŒCUS

A MASQUE



RHÆCUS  
CHARACTERS

RHÆCUS  
THE WOODSMAN  
CHLOE, *his daughter*  
A DRYAD

*In the INTERLUDE, A Faun, Oreads,  
Nymphs*

SCENE: *a glade in the wood. In the centre a  
giant Oak tree. The time is that of an April  
day.*

RHÆCUS *is a handsome youth, tall and sturdy,  
but slow of motion, a dreamer.*

THE WOODSMAN *is a lusty, white-bearded old  
man, rough and energetic.*

CHLOE, *a fair earth-type.*

THE DRYAD, *tall and slender; elusive and wild,  
changeable as the April day.*



**THE BEE** *does not appear, but his 'voice' may be imitated on a comb, or string of a 'cello.*

*The oak tree should have a practicable panel opening outward. But in case of an open-air performance with a real tree, the Dryad may appear from behind it.*

## RHÆCUS

*Musical Prelude, Old Greek Mode. Or,  
Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite I, 'Morning Mood.'*

*(A glade in the wood. Early morning. Enter  
the Woodsman, looking about him.)*

### WOODSMAN

This is the spot. Aye, this the very tree.  
What ho! Old fellow! How you tower there  
Up to the very sky; and down below  
Your roots, I dare say, grapple in the ground  
Among the bones of grandsires long since  
dead.

Ho! You are strong and lusty. So am I!  
You look down on me with a mighty scorn.  
You whisper in your leaves and seem to  
say —

‘Lo, I have seen a thousand-thousand pass  
Of such as he, the weak and withering race.’  
You shake with laughter, do you? You shall  
see!

My arm has power in it you should dread —  
Power, even as the lightning and the storm .

Which spared you centuries. Your time is  
come,

Old monarch. I decree that you shall die.

And who is monarch now? Down you shall  
go,

A shattered hulk to earth. And if up there  
High in your branches little birds have built  
Their silly nests — why, let them have a care;  
Let them take wings, or they will sing no  
more.

Ho! What a crash 'twill make! rare sport  
indeed.

Mine axe thirsts for the stroke! Have at you,  
then!

Fire for my kettle; warmth upon my hearth;  
Light in my cottage from the blazing logs —  
These you shall give. Oho! To boil my pot,  
For this you lived, old fellow, all these years,  
A noble mission. Ho! Have at you, now!

*(He hews at the oak. Enter Rhæcus and  
Chloe, hand in hand. Rhæcus starts,  
on seeing what is toward.)*

#### CHLOE

Father! 'Tis Father. See how blithe he works.  
He is a mighty woodsman, Rhæcus. Look!

Can you smite blows like that with your  
young arm?

Oh, fie! You are a laggard. Lend him aid.

*(Rhæcus stands inert.)*

WOODSMAN

Ho, child! I need no help from such as he.  
An idle dreamer! See, my arm is strong,  
I do not blench. I'll bring the great oak down  
In half a hundred strokes. Go you away  
To stroll and dream together, boy and girl.  
This is a man's work, Chloe. Mark me well.

CHLOE

Father, you speak too sharply of the lad.  
He is a dreamer, truly; that I know,  
And often I am jealous of the time  
He spends apart from me in fantasies.  
But he is strong and lusty. For my sake  
He will smite bravely. Rhæcus, do you hear?  
Now show you love me; show yourself a man!

RHÆCUS

The tree! My tree! The monarch of them all!  
And must he fall at last by mortal stroke  
Who lived so long amid his lesser fellows,  
Immune from tempest and from thunderbolt,

And whimsies of the Gods? Nay, Woodsman,  
    nay!'

Fell not this noble oak!

WOODSMAN

*(Pausing)*

And why not, pray?

RHÆCUS

There is no need. Choose you another one;  
For there are many in the forest here  
As fitting for your purpose.

WOODSMAN

*(Testily)*

Choose another!

Nay, I have set my heart on seeing him,  
This boaster of his strength, prone at my  
    feet.

Why, there is none so tall and old as he,  
So ripe for fuel. Ah, for many months  
He'll keep my cottage warm. He is near my  
    home,

Moreover; so the easier to haul  
His carcass when he's down. A neighbor, he;  
Good Neighbor, down you go!

*(He falls to with a laugh.)*

## RHÆCUS

A neighbor! Why, then, he should be your  
friend.

Deal kindly with him, as a neighbor should.

## CHLOE

A friend! O Rhœcus, this is fantasy;  
How can a tree be friendly? Hear him now,  
He has such silly fancies!

## RHÆCUS

Friend indeed.

He is my ancient comrade. Many years  
Since childish playing-time, here have I loved  
To linger in his checkered shade, and muse  
On thoughts too sweet for utterance. And  
here,

Dear Chloe, when I lost the sight of thee,  
The fragrance of thy presence, would I come  
And make soft music in the grateful silence;  
Or lie and doze and dream — and see thee  
still

Down-gazing sweetly from the branches  
there;

A laughing, eerie face, as thine would be  
Didst thou laugh oftener, Chloe.



CHLOE  
(*Pouting*)

'Twas not I.

I never climbed into the tree, you know!  
You dreamed; or else it was some elfin child  
That you love more. They say the place is  
haunted!

WOODSMAN

Haunted indeed! I'll have it down, I say!  
Enough of these weak whims and fooleries.  
Yon tree must fall. Go, get you to your play.

RHÆCUS

Nay! Spare the tree! If only for the sake  
Of that fair face which smiled upon my dreams  
Through leafy fingers. I will have it so!

WOODSMAN

Will have it so! Fellow, you speak too bold.  
Will have it so! Nay, I will have it down.  
Come, stand aside. I'll waste no words with  
you  
Whose words are all your might. Come, stand  
away!

RHÆCUS

Go to! You shall not! It is sacrilege.  
See, it has lived so long; it must be dear

Even to the Gods themselves. And how could  
you,

Mere mortal man, in half a thousand years,  
Build what you would destroy in half a  
day?

Oh, were you thrice the father of my Chloe,  
I'll lift my voice against you for its sake.

WOODSMAN

Aye, lift your voice. You dare not lift your  
arm!

I'll fell the tree. You stand there at your peril.

RHÆCUS

You shall not harm the tree!

CHLOE

Rhœcus! My father,  
It is my father that you threaten thus.  
Bethink you what you do!

WOODSMAN

The fellow's mad!  
Does he not know the power of my arm?  
Who lives that dare oppose me in this wood?

RHÆCUS

I dare! And, by the Gods, I dare again  
Strike for the oak. Back, Woodsman, back.

CHLOE

O Father!

WOODSMAN

He is quite mad! With madmen I've no coil.  
Nor would I spill his blood before my girl.  
This love, this dreaming, how it spoils a man!  
Chloe, away! We'll have no more of him.  
I'll find a better mate for you. But mark!  
I wait another day to work my will!  
The oak shall fall!

CHLOE

Yes, Father. Let's away.  
Rhæcus, farewell. You have no love for me,  
Who care so little for the word I spoke.  
I leave you to your dreams and foolish whims,  
And bitter may they be!

*(Exeunt Chloe and Woodsman, R.)*

RHÆCUS

*(Looking up at the oak)*

So, they are gone,  
The old man, and the maiden whom I love,  
Despising me; and thou art standing yet,  
Good friend, Old Oak! Yes, I have saved thy  
life,  
I could not see thy majesty undone.

Thou who so oft hast soothed and sheltered  
me,

Whose branches on my sleep shed magic balm  
For yearning more than mortal! For thy sake  
My Chloe's love is lost. Ah, let me see  
Her radiant face, as oftentimes before  
Through thy green branches peering down on  
me;

*(He covers his face with his hands and sits  
down under the tree.)*

My Chloe's face! But strangely fair and dear,  
Full of spring laughter and the untamed joy  
Of nature and the childhood of the world.

*(Long pause; voice of the Dryad from the  
tree.)*

## DRYAD

Rhœcus!

## RHÆCUS

What voice is that? Whence comes the cry?

## DRYAD

*(In the tree)*

Rhœcus!

## RHÆCUS

It calls again! The tree! The tree!  
It echoes from the oak! O Mystery!

Art thou my dream, the oak's enshrined spirit?  
If so, come forth, sweet Shadow!

DRYAD

*(Appearing through a panel in the tree)*

Rhœcus!

RHÆCUS

Ah!

Do I then wake or slumber?

DRYAD

Gentle friend,

Lo, thou hast saved my sheltering tree. Kind  
Rhœcus,

I love thee for that deed. I would be grateful.

RHÆCUS

Fair Spirit! Grateful thou? Oh, it is I  
Who bless thy favor. Thee to see, to hear,  
In very presence lovelier than dreams;  
So many times half spied amid the leaves,  
Half heard in forest murmurs! Oh, draw near,  
Speak to me once again.

DRYAD

Oh, Rhœcus, Rhœcus!

I love to say thy name, for it is dear.  
Thou sav'st my father oak; thou call'st me  
forth

To breathe the sweet world-fragrance once  
again.

Oh, long, long have I waited — many years,  
Aye, centuries, for this bright day of freedom.  
Dear light, and air, and odor of the flowers!  
The flicker of the sunbeams, and the song  
Of bird and brook and bee. — (*Humming of  
Bee begins.*) Ah, little Bee,

You wait me here, I see! My messenger  
He is, dear Rhœcus. See him light upon  
My finger. So! He has sweet news to tell,  
Sharp chronicles of all that has befallen  
These ages while I slept. (*Humming ceases.*) —  
Ah, Rhœcus, Rhœcus!

Little thou knowst the boon thou hast be-  
stowed.

It is so dark in there, and still, and cold;  
No sunshine and no neighboring. No room  
To breathe, to laugh and dance, — as I will  
dance

For thee, dear Rhœcus, if thou'lt have it so.  
(*Listens.*)

Lo, even now I hear the flute of Spring  
That bids my feet to frolic. Hear, oh, hear!  
(*Flute far off. She dances. Rhœcus gazes  
and listens spellbound. Music, Grieg's  
Waltz, Op. 28.*)



## RHÆCUS

O blithesome Spirit, simple as a child,  
 Wild as bright nature and as innocent!  
 The image of my dreams!

## DRYAD

*(Flitting about)*

Laugh with me, Rhœcus!  
 So many centuries since I have danced!  
 Oh, I am happy as an April bird  
 Who finds the world new made for him. But  
     now  
 I have my heavy debt to pay to Rhœcus.  
 It makes me thrall unto thy wishes. Speak,  
 What wouldst thou, Rhœcus, for this day is  
     thine?  
 What dost thou long for? Let me give it thee!

## RHÆCUS

What do I long for. Oh, thou very dream  
 Of the free spirit! What indeed!

## DRYAD

Nay, Rhœcus,  
 Be thou not slow to ask what I can give,  
 And more than mortal have the power to  
     do,

For those who please me. Ask me, gentle lad!

*(She steps and poses rhythmically as she speaks.)*

Say, shall I dance for thee again? — the dance  
Of flowers in spring when soft winds blow  
across;

The maze of wavering tree-tops in the breeze,  
Of ripples in the pool, of circling birds;  
Of thistledown before the autumn wind;  
The snowflakes swirling amid fallen leaves. —  
Wilt thou have this, dear Rhœcus?

RHÆCUS

Aye, but more!

DRYAD

Yes, Rhœcus, yes! For I will sing to thee,  
And thou shalt sing. We'll make the echoes  
reel!

And we will wander over hill and dale,  
Playing with little creatures of the wild  
Whom once I knew so well. Oh, thou wilt  
laugh!

The antics of the woods all new to thee,  
How quaint they are, and dear! And I will  
teach

My pupil all mine ancient forest lore

Before I must return. Thine eyes are bright,  
Thy cheeks are ruddy and thy limbs are  
strong

To climb and run and dance. I think that  
thou

Wilt make a merry comrade. Shall it be?  
Or hast thou other wish at heart more dear,  
Which I, long cloistered, guess not?

## RHÆCUS

Gentle Spirit,  
Thy words are sweet; but still — I long for  
more!

## DRYAD

Why dost thou hesitate, and look at me  
So wistfully? Nay, speak and tell me,  
Rhæcus,  
Thy dearest wish. What can I give thee more?

## RHÆCUS

Give me thyself! It is for thee I long!  
My dream of dreams, unvisioned till this day!  
Through winter fasts and summer's thirsty  
drougths,  
Fires of the fall and yearnings of the Spring,  
My spirit needs the neighboring of thine.  
Be mine, all mine, forever!

## DRYAD

How, be thine?

I am not human, Rhœcus. Free am I  
Of earthly chains. Child of the Gods, im-  
mortal.

A Dryad, I, no kindred of thy race,  
Pent in a tree forever.

## RHÆCUS

Oh, be mine!

Teach me to win thee for mine own, fair  
Dryad!

## DRYAD

*(Laughing)*

Nay, that I cannot teach thee, mortal boy!  
I'll laugh with thee and love thee. I will  
smooth

The creases from thy sullen forehead. Yes,  
I'll play with thee, as with another Dryad,  
And show thee pleasant things, and twine  
thee flowers,

And we shall be so happy! For a day  
I am thy neighbor, Rhœcus. Then once more  
Back to my tree. We will not think on  
that;

Let us be happy now.

RHÆCUS

Child of the Gods!

Oh, that thou wouldst transform me to thy  
nature,

Make me immortal, even as thyself.

DRYAD

Alas, dear Rhœcus! 'Tis a mighty boon  
Beyond the power of a sylvan sprite,  
Heir of the forest. Ask me not! Thou know'st  
I cannot give thee immortality.  
The favored ones *are* of the Gods, themselves,  
Not *made*.

RHÆCUS

Oh, pity me, dear gentle Spirit!

DRYAD

How should I pity thee, thou peevish boy,  
Free, free, in this wide world of lovely things,  
With all its mysteries to live and learn?  
Oh, see this happy day before us both,  
Rich in the promise of adventuring.

*(She becomes serious.)*

But tell me, Rhœcus; who was she — the  
voice

Who spoke unkindly when my tree was  
threatened?

Her tone cut through me as an axe the oak.  
I saw her not.

RHÆCUS

A voice? A voice that hurt!  
Ah, thou must mean the Woodsman's daughter,  
Chloe.

DRYAD

Chloe? And what is she to thee, dear  
Rhæcus?

RHÆCUS

A woman; a mere mortal.

DRYAD

Yet thou lov'st her;  
Rhæcus, thy voice was full of gentleness  
To her, not to the cruel Woodsman.

RHÆCUS

*(Hesitating)*

Once

I fancied her; I loved, as one may say.  
But all is changed!

DRYAD

Because she was not kind,  
And spoke unfriendly of my guardian tree?  
Ah, Rhæcus! Thou art good and merciful.  
I love thee!

RHÆCUS

Oh, that blessed word of hope!  
Sweet Spirit, breathe its music once again.

DRYAD

Why should I not? I love thee, Rhœcus, yes,  
For thou art kind and good to look upon,  
And I am grateful, who would be thy friend.

RHÆCUS

Would thou wert mortal woman at my side!

DRYAD

A mortal, I! A woman with a voice  
That hurts, like Chloe's! Yet thou lovedst  
her once.  
Wouldst have me in her place to be thy  
friend?

RHÆCUS

My wife!

DRYAD

Thy wife! A word till now unknown.  
Thy wife! Yet now I seem to understand.  
Thy mortal wife! — The Gods have come to  
earth,  
So I believe, and put on mortal dress  
For love of human creatures like to thee,



Noble and fair. Oh, it were not so hard  
For me to stoop and take thy frailness on  
As for thy nature to become immortal,  
Or so I think. And would it please thee,

Rhæcus,

If I gave up my Dryad life for thee,  
To be a mortal woman for thy sake?

RHÆCUS

I love thee! O sweet Dryad, for his sake  
Who saved thy tree, be kind!

DRYAD

Not so, I love.

And yet — it may be — All is strange to me!

RHÆCUS

Beloved!

DRYAD

Much I owe thee; much I'd pay.  
This mortal love I know not. Ah, but think!  
No more to be a Dryad! Nevermore  
Be folded in the safety of my oak  
Against all fear. And nevermore to bathe  
In silver starlight and immortal dew.  
Never to share the revels of the nymphs,  
With Pan and all my sister Oreads!  
Ah, Rhæcus, dost thou listen? Nevermore

Stranger to pain and sorrow and distress.  
 Weak in a world whose ways I do not know,  
 Helpless before a fate I cannot see,  
 To bind myself a captive; to embrace  
 The perilous lot of woman for thy sake.  
 And for what guaranty? Oh, is it safe?  
 How shall I trust thee, Rhæcus?

RHÆCUS

Trust to me!

Oh, my Beloved! I would die for thee!

DRYAD

I ask thee not to die, it is to live,  
 And that perchance is harder. Would I knew!

RHÆCUS

What would I not do for thee!

DRYAD

Wouldst be true,  
 True until death to me?

RHÆCUS

Aye, true till death.  
*(Seizes her hands.)*

DRYAD

And I would fain believe thee! Rhæcus,  
 Rhæcus!'

I owe thee more than life, and I will pay,

Though heavy be the price; 'tis Nature's law.  
This day I gave thee. Give it back again,  
Give it to me, one last wild Dryad day,  
Of careless freedom and immortal joy.

*(He releases her.)*

Oh, my last day! I will be spendthrift, I,  
Nor lose one moment of its preciousness.  
But when the shadows lengthen, I will send  
To thee my little faithful messenger,  
My Bee; my golden, keen, and murmurous  
Bee.

Come hither, hither, little robber, come!

*(Holds out her hand.)*

See, Rhæcus, here I hold him to thine ear —  
Nay, start not! He shall never hurt my friend.  
List to his murmur. Now thou'lt know the  
sound

When he shall come to summon thee away  
To some dim covert in the wood, where I  
Shall wait thee trembling; then, alas! no more  
A blithesome Dryad, but thy mortal wife.

#### RHÆCUS

Child of my dreams! And wilt thou come to  
me

To make my life one sweet, long dream of bliss?

Ah, can I e'er be worthy! Oh, Beloved,  
How eagerly I wait thy messenger!  
How blithely will I greet him; o'er the world  
Through direst ventures would I follow him,  
Dear golden Bee, to the Elysian Fields  
You promise. Oh, my love, I thirst! One  
kiss!

## DRYAD

*(Eluding him)*

Nay, Rhœcus! What know I of kisses yet!  
I am a Dryad still. Farewell, farewell!  
Until the evening, when my Messenger  
Shall whisper of thine oath, lest thou forget!  
Now for my Day!

*(Exit Dryad, R.)*

## RHÆCUS

*(Pursuing her)*

Oh, stay, Beloved, stay!  
One moment yet! See, where she fleets  
along  
Like breath of Springtime blowing o'er the  
grass.  
I cannot follow. I will wait and dream,  
Here 'neath the oak, my perfect dream once  
more,

Until her messenger shall come. Forget!  
Shall I forget to live?

*(He lies down under the oak.)*

Haste, sluggard Bee!

*(He sleeps.)*

*Here follows the INTERLUDE*

*(The stage light is gradually changed from morning to a mysterious half-light, as if picturing the dream of Rhæcus. Soft piping of a flute is heard, nearer and nearer. Music, Edward German's 'Valse Gracieuse,' for flute and piano, played behind the scene. A Faun enters, with a band of nymphs — Oreads, Dryads, as many as the stage will allow. They dance about, and are presently joined by the Dryad, whom they welcome gayly. After a merry dance the nymphs flit away pursued by the mischievous Faun. Rhæcus sleeps throughout it all at the foot of the oak. They pay no attention to him. After the Interlude the stage light changes to moonlight. The Day has passed.)*

## PART II

*(Rhæcus is still asleep. Enter the Dryad, R., with her arms full of spring flowers. She does not see him at first.)*

## DRYAD

Ah! What a happy day! How I have lived!  
How I have strayed like any summer cloud  
Beyond the bounds of reason. How I played!  
The flowers were dear as ever, and the grass  
Had not forgot its kindness to my feet.  
The breeze and I ran races, and the brook;  
The lake caressed me with her tender lips,  
When I lay floating 'mid the lily-pads,  
And played I was a water-blossom, too.  
O lovely world! O happy day!! O light,  
And fragrance, and the touch of warm, soft  
things,  
My kindred! How I love you! How my heart  
Cleaves to you all. But now, my gnarled old  
oak,  
The day is over and the twilight falls.  
Either thy cell must cloister me once more,  
Or I must do on mere mortality  
For Rhæcus' sake. *(She shudders.)*

Ah, whiles agone, I saw  
A wounded roebuck writhing in his gore;  
Children I spied who robbed a linnet's nest;  
A thrush trailed past me on a broken wing;  
And with my scarf I bound the bleeding paw  
Of a poor, timorous hare, bruised by a stone!  
And all these moaned — 'The work of mortal  
man!'

Oh, do they torture so their fellow-folk?  
Are they to weakness ever merciless,  
To babes and children, to the poor and old?  
Perchance their very wives, whom once they  
loved —

Ah, those must suffer most! Oh, cruel world,  
So full of sorrow! Nay, I'll break my vow,  
The price too costly — I, a Dryad still,  
Cloistered, yet free in spirit —

*(She sees Rhæcus.)*

Lo, himself!

Still sleeping 'neath my tree. How fair he is!  
How lithe and strong! Naught have I seen so  
noble.

*(She steals up and looks down tenderly upon  
him, scattering her flowers on his face.)*

He smiles now in his sleep, and thinks of me,  
Longing for evening and my messenger.

*(Sound of footsteps outside.)*



A heavy tread! Who comes this way? I fear,  
I know not why; I am immortal still.

*(She hides behind the oak. Enter Woodsman, R.)*

WOODSMAN

Ho! Now the ground is clear. To the task  
once more.

I'll have my payment from this haughty tree,  
Which stands to mock me, doubly hateful —  
yes,

For its own sake and for that meddling fool's  
Who vowed it should not fall, being his friend!  
I'll have it down and piled beside my hearth  
Ere he or any one can stop my axe!

*(He spies Rhæcus asleep.)*

Hey! Here's the meddler, like a log himself  
Prone on the earth, where may he rot forever!

*(He muses.)*

I'll pay my reckoning with a double stroke!  
What, you would spoil my pastime, would  
you, lad?

What, you would save the giant tree, your  
friend,

Your loitering place, your dreaming place!  
You sluggard!

Well, who shall save you now?

*(Heaves up the axe. The Dryad, leaning from behind the tree, makes a gesture as of sending the Bee from her hand. The Woodsman drops his axe and claps his hand to his face, screaming with pain.)*

Ho! Huh! A devil!

A raging devil stings me. Ha, another!

Again! Again! A host of devils here!

Surely the place is haunted. I'll be gone.

Away, ye fiends! Away!

*(Exit Woodsman, L., striking at the bees and groaning.)*

DRYAD

*(Coming forth wringing her hands)*

Oh, horrible! He would have slain the lad!

How brutal are these humans, oh, how foul!

RHÆCUS

*(Speaking in his sleep)*

Beloved!

DRYAD

*(Leaning over him)*

Rhæcus! Oh, he lives! He lives!

My hand has saved his life, and by the Law,  
I am absolved and free. My debt is paid.

But what is this that binds me to thee still?  
What is this ache unknown? My Love, my  
Sweet!

He would have slain thee! Left thee bathed  
in blood

Like that poor hare, the dappled deer, the  
bird!

Oh, who would choose to do on human na-  
ture?

And yet — ah, Rhœcus! Now thou owest thy  
life

Even to me. I love thee steadfastly,  
As mortal mother loves her mortal babe,  
But more, aye, more! Rhœcus, I will be thine!  
I know thy yearning, for it is mine own.  
Anon I'll send my messenger to thee.  
Farewell, my Love!

*(She stoops and lays a hand sweetly upon  
his lips. He turns, rubbing his eyes.  
Dryad starts, exits hastily, L.)*

RHÆCUS

*(Still asleep)*

My Spirit! Oh, my Dryad!

*(Enter Chloe, R., who runs to his side and  
kneeling kisses him tenderly. She throws*

*away the Dryad's flowers and places her own pink roses on his breast.)*

CHLOE

You called me, Rhœcus! Dearest, I am here.  
He called me in his sleep! He loves me still!  
Rhœcus! Thy Chloe kneels before thy feet,  
Awake, and tell her thy forgiveness.

RHÆCUS

*(Waking)*

Ah!

Where is she, where?

CHLOE

O Dearest, I am here!

RHÆCUS

*(Looking dreamily at the flowers)*

Methought she watched above me as I slept,  
She brought me garlands, stooped and  
touched my face.

CHLOE

Yes, Rhœcus, yes. I kissed you on the lips.  
Come, now, and let us be dear friends again.  
Here you have slept this livelong summer  
day —

Oh, such a tedious, woeful day, dear Heart!  
I spent it all in weeping.

RHÆCUS

Was it thou?

Ah, was it thou, good Chloe? What of *her*?  
I have been dreaming. It was all a dream,  
The song, the dancing and the gentle voice;  
Perchance our quarrel too? —

*(Chloe shakes her head.)*

Nay, that was real.

So art thou real, dear Chloe, like these  
flowers,

Real, rosy-sweet and fresh; aye, very fair,  
No dream. Thou broughtst them, Chloe?

CHLOE

Yes, 'twas I.

I brought them, Rhæcus, to make friends  
again.

Say that you love me, even as yesterday.

RHÆCUS

I love thee, dear, even as yesterday —  
Or was it years ago, or centuries?  
Sweet Chloe, I have slept and dreamed a  
dream,  
More real than life and truer than this  
world —  
Of fancies and immortal presences,

And tantalus love unsatisfied. I wake,  
To find thee warm and rosy and no dream,  
My human love, my other self beside me.  
My darling! Why, how could we ever  
quarrel!

*(The bee buzzes about his ear. He brushes  
it away.)*

## CHLOE

Oh! Oh! The rude and saucy Bee! Away!  
How dare he come so near! Rhæcus, indeed  
I knew you loved me, spite of all your fancies.  
We shall be happy now. Kiss me, my lad!

*(Rhæcus is about to kiss her, but the Bee  
buzzes closer. He starts angrily, and  
once more brushes it away.)*

## RHÆCUS

Away, thou little pest! I say, away!  
Come with me, Chloe, to thy father's house.  
I will make peace with him, the good old  
man.

Thy father, Chloe! I forgot myself;  
I was too sharp, too set upon my dream.  
The Woodsman has a wisdom of his own,  
But he has never known and loved a tree;  
He kens but one way to the heart of it.

CHLOE

'Twill make rare blazes, dear, when nights are  
cold  
For you and me.

RHÆCUS

Alas! The end of dreams!

Come let us go.

*(The Bee buzzes about his ear. He is  
beside himself with anger.)*

How now! That Bee again!

Thou rascal! I will teach thee once for all  
To come betwixt my little love and me.  
What, villain! Thou wouldst sting my very  
eyes?

Ah!

*(He screams out with pain, clapping his  
hand to his eyes. Then he strikes down  
the Bee and sets his foot upon it.)*

Thou shalt live to rob the flowers no more.

CHLOE

Rhæcus! He stung you! But the thing is  
dead.

Where are you hurt, my love, my poor dear  
love?



## RHÆCUS

Mine eyes! Mine eyes! Oh, Chloe, in mine eyes!

*(Dryad appears from the woods, L., and looks at him sadly. Chloe does not see her.)*

## DRYAD

Rhœcus!

## RHÆCUS

The Dryad!

*(The Dryad points her finger at him slowly and sadly. He clasps his hands suddenly over his eyes with a groan.)*

## DRYAD

Rhœcus, fare thee well.

Take me, good oak, and cloister me once more  
Safe from this cruel world, this cruel love.

The sun is sinking. Oh, farewell, farewell,

My happy day! I take back to my tree

Tears; my one gift from man.

*(She goes slowly back into the tree and closes the door after her.)*

## RHÆCUS

*(Uncovering his eyes)*

Where is she? Where?

I see her not! What's come upon mine eyes?

They see not as before. Ah, am I blind!  
Blind, oh, ye Gods, not that!

CHLOE

Blind, Rhœcus! Nay,  
Look not so wildly; turn your eyes on me.  
*(He looks at her.)*

RHÆCUS

I see thee, Chloe. Yes, I see these trees,  
The forest and the flowers and the moon.  
But there is something gone, a glory gone,  
The rapture of pure sight; the Spirit gone!  
Gone, and I saw her once! I saw her once!  
*(Holds out his arms to the tree.)*

DRYAD

*(In the tree)*

Rhœcus, farewell!

RHÆCUS

O love, sweet love, farewell!  
The best of life, the better part of me.

CHLOE

To whom farewell? Who seemed to speak  
erewhile?  
Was it the Echo? You act so strangely,  
Rhœcus!

Where you were gazing there, *there*, even now,  
I saw no one. There was no creature near,  
Only the great oak tree — the hateful tree,  
I think indeed 'tis haunted! Come away!

## RHÆCUS

Thou saw'st not, Chloe, for 'twas ever so.  
But I have seen, and now I see no more  
The beauty that is dearest. I have lost!

## DRYAD

*(Sobbing in the tree)*

Farewell, O Rhæcus!

## CHLOE

Rhæcus, come with me,  
To the warm hut with supper by the fire,  
And I will make you soon forget your dreams.

## RHÆCUS

Aye, evermore with thee, Chloe. Lead on.  
Back to this spot no more. Sweet Dream,  
farewell!

*(He turns back to the tree, but all is silent.  
Exeunt Chloe and Rhæcus. A flute is  
heard piping plaintively afar off.)*

## CURTAIN





# THE WISHING MOON

A PLAY IN ONE ACT



# THE WISHING MOON

## CHARACTERS

### Nature Sprites:

LISP OF LEAVES

RIPPLE OF RAIN

FLOWER DEW

BIRD SONG

FLUTTER BY

BREEZY BLOW

GRASSY GREEN

SUNNY WARM

SHADOW COOL

BEE BUSY, *the Joker with a sting*

### Children:

KAYE, *the boy with a four-leaved clover*

BELLE, *who works instead of wishing*

EENIE, *with a luckystone*

MEENIE, *with a horseshoe*

MINEY, *with a wishbone*

MO, *with a lariat, cowboy's costume*



WEE, a little one with a butterfly net

WOE, a cross one with a mousetrap

WACK, with a big stick

SCENE: *A green glade on the edge of a wood,  
back a hollow tree.*

ARGUMENT: *The Children have planned to trap a Fairy on Wishing Moon, and each get his or her Wish without any effort. The Nature Sprites of course know this intention and are amused. But Bee Busy the Joker intends to teach them a lesson. She curls up in the hollow tree pretending to sleep. The Children, led by Kaye, trace her hither, each armed with a fairy-trap. They find and surround the Fairy and try to trap her. All but Belle, who alone refuses to aid them, for she understands the Fairies through her love and understanding of Nature. The Fairy charms the Children into stiff, helpless figures, telling them how foolish they are to expect to get something for nothing. Belle pleads for them with the Sprite, who grants her Wish because it is an unselfish one and because Belle herself did her best to make it come true.*

## THE WISHING MOON

PRELUDE of Nature Sounds, typifying the kind of Sprites who are approaching: *Lisp of Leaves, Ripple of Rain, Bird Song, etc.*

(Enter, drifting singly and in pairs, lightly, slowly, the Nature Sprites, who begin to weave a simple, wild Dance, singing as they weave)

### FLOWER DEW

Sunny Warm! Shadow Cool! Sisters, do you follow?

### RIPPLE OF RAIN

Breezy Blow! Grassy Green! Over hill and hollow!

### LISP OF LEAVES

Sh! Softly, softly, Breezy Blow! Softly go.

### FLOWER DEW

Flutter By, dear Flutter By!

### FLUTTER BY

Here am I!

### BIRD SONG

Grassy Green, Flower Dew, where are you?

FLOWER

Here, sweet Bird Song. Here, here!

LISP

Sh! Sh! They are near, very near.

BIRD

Who? Who?

BREEZY

Children, but who are we to fear? Ha, ha, ha!  
(*All laugh.*)

BIRD

Why do you laugh, and why do they come?  
It is night. Why are they not safe at home?

BREEZY

Do you not know? They seek us with traps!  
Traps for a Fairy!

ALL

Traps! Ha, ha, ha!

LISP

Sh! Sh! We would not be seen, Sisters. Sh!  
Breezy Blow, Grassy Green.

BIRD

But why to-night do they seek us out?  
Wandering all roundabout?

## BREEZY

This is their Wishing Moon, they say.  
Wonderful Day!

## RIPPLE

*(Laughing)*

They think they might catch a Fairy asleep,  
And gain a wish which we must keep.  
Their plans are deep! Ha, ha!

## FLOWER

Traps to catch wishes  
As if they were fishes.

## LISP

Sh!

## GRASS

What mortal can catch a Fairy asleep? The  
idea! How very queer!

## FLOWER

They know they could see us, yes, they  
might,  
In this one hour of this one night,  
In the pale moonlight.  
But catch us with traps! Oho, oho!

## ALL

No, no, no!

LISP

Sh! I catch a murmur, what can it be?

*(Faint humming sound.)*

BREEZY

Where is Bee Busy, where is she?

FLOWER

Our Joker with her naughty sting is somewhere loitering.

GRASS

She is up to mischief, I'll be bound.

FLUTTER BY

Hark! A sound!

BREEZY

She is coming, coming. I can hear her humming, humming.

*(Enter, dancing, Bee Busy. HUMMING SONG.**Bee and Chorus. All droning UM!)*

BEE

Busy, busy, busy as a Bee!

Fairies are not lazy folks.

FAIRIES

Not we!

Orphan birdies are our care,

Orphan insects everywhere,

Tiny buds and tiny eggs,  
Little feet and little legs,  
Tangled webs and tattered wings,  
A million, million, million things  
Keep us whirling busily, busily,  
Keep us twirling dizzily, dizzily.  
Lazy, dazy a Child may be —

## FAIRIES

But not we!

## BEE

Busy, busy, busy as a Bee,  
Children may have time to Wish —

## FAIRIES

But not we!

## BEE

We must keep the glow-worm lit.  
Paint the blossoms bit by bit,  
Twist the tendrils, push the snails,  
Brush the little catkin tails,  
Set the mushrooms out in rings,  
A million, million, million things!  
So we're always whirling busily,  
Twirling, twirling dizzily, dizzily.  
Teary, dreary a child may be —

FAIRIES

But not we!

(DANCE)

FLOWER

Oh, Bee Busy, have you seen the children?

BEE

They follow close behind me. I left a honey trail, a sweet trail. They will not fail.

BREEZY

I hear them coming, trying to be sly.

GREENY

Their heavy feet tread down the grass, as they pass.

LISP

Sh! Listen!

BEE

Their leader is a smart Aleck named Kaye. He thinks he is very wise. But I shall give him a surprise to-day.

FAIRIES

A surprise? Oh, what will you do to him, Bee Busy?

FLOWER

Is it one of your naughty tricks, Joker?



## FAIRIES

Tell us! Tell us!

## BEE

They think they can trap me. They will surround and stop me. Catch me and watch me. Let them try. I know a secret, I.

## BREEZY

Oh, what?

## LISP

Sh!

## FLOWER

You must not hurt them, Bee Busy.

## GRASS

No. A Fairy must never hurt a human child.

## BEE

Well, they are selfish, they are silly.  
They must be taught a lesson, willy-nilly.  
They know we do not like to have them peep  
And peer at us, and yet they mean to creep  
Quite near, and trap us in our sleep.  
I will catch them!

## FAIRIES

Catch them! Snatch them! Match them!

## BEE

I will make a spell when they think me dozing.  
I will snare them well, while reposing,  
If they come nosing.  
Catch them in their own poor traps, maybe.  
We shall see. Watch me!

## LISP

Sh! Here they come.

## BIRD

Let us hide among the trees and watch the  
fun.

## RIPPLE

Let us sing Bee Busy to sleep, and then be  
gone. Ha, ha! (All laugh.)

## LISP

Sh!

*(Bee Busy lies down in the hollow tree at  
back and pretends to sleep. The Sprites  
gather behind on both sides and sing a  
mock Lullaby, while Bee seems to sleep.)*

## LULLABY

## FAIRIES

Fold your wings, gauzy wings,  
Sleep, sleep!

Cease your busy flutterings,

Sleep, sleep!

No more honey for the store,

No more wax, no more!

Sleep!

Quiet in your little cell,

Sleep soundly, sleep well,

What of mischief? What of stings?

Sleep!

#### LISP

Sh!

#### FAIRIES

Sh! Sh!

*(Exit Fairies, stealing away with finger on  
lips, laughing softly, ha, ha!)*

PRELUDE to Children's entrance

*(Contrast to first Prelude, noisy, march steps,  
rough)*

*(Enter Children, led by Kaye, on tiptoe,  
trying to be quiet, but very tired)*

#### CHORUS OF CHILDREN

Creak, creak!

Squeak, squeak!

What a noise our shoes do make!

Till the whole ground seems to shake.

All the little grasses quake,  
Everything asleep must wake!

Sh! Sh! Sh!

We are trying to be still,  
But our voices are so shrill,  
Echoes wake from every hill,

Sh! Sh! Sh!

How can children catch a Fairy,  
When we know they are so wary?  
She'll escape, we know she will!

Sh!

#### KAYE

Boys and girls, this is the place, I am sure.  
The honey-trail has led us where a Fairy has  
her bed. Let us look carefully and maybe we  
shall spy the Fairy under this big tree.

#### CHILDREN

Oh, we are so tired!

CHORUS (HUNTING FOR A FAIRY)

Over the meadow and down the hill,  
Into the moonlit valley,  
Wandering, wandering, wandering still,  
Rally, O Children, rally!  
Maybe the Fairy is hid close by,  
Have your Wish ready and soon we'll try,

When we have sought her and caught her and  
taught her,  
Each with the cute little trap we have brought  
her,  
Under the silver Wishing Moon,  
Our Wish she will give, soon, soon!

CHILDREN

*(Each waving her trap)*

I have my trap all ready!

KAYE

Steady, now, steady!

CHILDREN

Under the silver Wishing Moon,  
Our wish she will give, soon, soon!

KAYE

I have a four-leaved clover, green,  
That is a charm unfailing,  
I'll wish for the finest boat ever seen,  
So I can go a-sailing.  
If a wee Fairy is hidden about,  
I give her a warning she'd better look out!  
When I have sought her and caught her and  
taught her,  
Each with the cute little trap we have brought  
her,

Under the silver Wishing Moon,  
Our Wish she must give, soon, soon!

CHILDREN

I have my trap all ready.

KAYE

Steady, now, steady!

CHILDREN

Under the silver Wishing Moon,  
Our Wish we shall have, soon, soon!

*(Children jump up and down clapping  
their hands.)*

Soon, soon!

KAYE

Are we all here, Kids? Let me see. (*Counting in turn as if 'counting out.' Each child answers here as her name is called.*) Eenie, Meenie, Miney, Mo, Kaye, Here, Belle — where's Belle?

CHILDREN

She didn't come. She's off somewhere.

KAYE

Oh, well. Wee, Woe, Wack. Are your traps all ready, Eenie?

EENIE

See! Here I have a Luckystone.

MEENIE

Look, I brought a big Wishbone.

MINEY

Here is a Horseshoe that I found.

MO

My lasso will noose her, I'll be bound.

WEE

I can catch a wee one in my butterfly net.

WOE

Pooh! My stout old rat-trap is better yet.

WACK

Come along and find her, find her quick.

I will get my Wish with a great big stick.

*(Enter Belle with a basket of flowers,  
mosses, etc.)*

BELLE

Oh, Kaye, what are you doing?

KAYE

Hello, Belle. You are always hunting around in the woods. Will you help us catch a Fairy?

BELLE

Catch a Fairy! No, indeed. You couldn't,



I wouldn't. They would not like it. Neither should I. I wouldn't try.

KAYE

We want to get our Wishes.

BELLE

What are your Wishes?

KAYE

Well, I want a big sailboat.

BELLE

But there isn't any water around here to sail it on. That is a silly wish!

EENIE

I want yards and yards of candy.

BELLE

It would soon be gone, and you would be sick, stupid!

MEENIE

I want a new doll.

BELLE

You have four already, Greedy!

MINEY

I want a car that will go.

BELLE

But you have no place to keep it, you know.

MO

I want a wild spotted bronco.

BELLE

But you don't know how to ride.

WEE

I want to be a great big girl, Belle.

BELLE

You silly little thing! You will be big some day, without wishing, and then you will wish to be small again. Everybody does.

WOE

I want a story-book that will never end.

WACK

And I want a bag of money that I can never wholly spend.

BELLE

Such silly, selfish wishes! Why don't you kiddies go about getting something worth while for yourselves?

CHILDREN

How can we get it, Belle?

BELLE

By working for it, not by a spell.

KAYE

*(Disgustedly)*

Oh! We want to get it without working.

BELLE

You cannot do it. You have to work to get the things you want. But see all these lovely things you can find by hunting. If you learn about them and find where they grow. (*Holding up mushrooms, berries, etc.*) See, good things to eat, pretty things to wear, sweet smells, dainty shells. These are better than the things you say you wish for. And I know a story-book that has no end, and treasure that you can never spend, too.

SONG, TREASURES OF THE WOODS (BELLE)

Come with me, O Children, come!

Into the old green wood,

Into the pleasant field,

Where Nature opens wide her story-book

Full of sweet things for you,

Secrets for you to learn,

Merry things to do.

Treasure to find, wherever you may go,

If you but know.

These you can never wholly spend,

This is a story book that has no end,  
Come! Come with me!

CHILDREN

*(Turning away)*

We want our nice fat Wishes!

*(Kaye has been hunting round during this song, not interested. He now comes forward excitedly, pointing towards the hollow tree.)*

KAYE

I have found the Fairy. Look!

In this little nook,

Sound asleep in the hollow tree.

Just see!

But softly, softly, do not wake her yet,

Till we are ready and our traps are set.

CHILDREN

*(Crowding round)*

Let me see! Let me see!

BELLE

Shame! Go away. You must not spy upon a Fairy. They do not like it. They have a right to remain unseen, since they do such lovely things in secret. You might hurt her

feelings so that she could not work any more.  
I will not look, unless she speaks to me first.

SONG, SECRETS OF NATURE (BELLE)

If you want to learn the Secrets that the  
Fairies know,  
To the heart of Nature you must go.  
You must love the little creatures that are  
glad and sad like you,  
Bunnies in the sunshine, blossoms in the  
dew.  
But Fairies will be secret, so let them be,  
If they want to hide in a hollow tree,  
Under quilts of greensward, or beneath the  
snow,  
If a Fairy vanishes — let her go!

KAYE

Nonsense, Belle. You know very well that  
this Wishing Moon is our great chance to trap  
a Fairy. Will you help us or no?

BELLE

No!

KAYE

Then, One, Two, Three. Out goes she!

## CHILDREN

Go! Go! Go!

*(They push Belle down stage to left, where she lingers, wistfully watching.)*

## KAYE

Come on, Kids, and let us make our spell.  
With all our traps to snare the Fairy well.  
And just at the moment when she opens her  
eyes,  
If we Wish suddenly, take her by surprise,  
She will have to grant our Wishes every one.  
This is how it's done.

## SPELL

Eenie, Meenie, Miney, Mo,  
Cape Nigrum digito,  
Sive clamat solveto,  
Eenie, Meenie, Miney, Mo.

Kaye, Belle — broken well —

*(Children taking hands go slowly around the tree, while Kaye sings the Spell. Then at 'broken well,' suddenly interrupting, each begins to jabber his Wish. 'I Wish — I Wish,' etc. Each holds her trap out towards the Fairy, threateningly, as if getting ready to catch her,*

*making a racket. In the midst of this the Fairy rises, waving her pointed spear above them, which causes the children to stiffen into queer attitudes, as if unable to move.)*

## BEE

Buzz! I sting you into quiet!  
Give us peace from all this riot.  
You who come to our beautiful woods  
Wishing for dull things, *bads*, not goods!  
I put on you the Spell of Nature,  
Drawn from every Spirit Creature.  
Flower Dew and Grassy Green,  
Lisp of Leaves and Ripple of Rain,  
Sunny Warm and Shadow Cool,  
Breezy Blow,  
Bird Song, Flutter By,  
Bee Busy, Bee Busy, that is me!  
Zee!  
By all these I charm you still.

## BELLE

*(Clasping her hands)*

Oh, what has happened to the children?  
They are all so still!



BEE

They tried to trap a Fairy, silly ones, and they are trapped themselves. You cannot trap the elves.

BELLE

Oh, the poor children!

BEE

You are merciful and kind, little girl. You would not trap a Fairy if you could, I am sure.

BELLE

Oh, no! Besides, I have no Wish — or had none until now.

BEE

You are kind and good.

You know the secrets of the wood.

I could not charm you if I would.

You are proof against my sting.

BELLE

Bees do not sting me.

BEE

No, of course they don't.

BELLE

Everything is so kind. Dogs do not bite me.

BEE

No, of course they won't. Nor kittens scratch, and birds are not afraid. You love the creatures, gentle little maid. You know their secrets ——

BELLE

I do not know all the secrets, but I love to find them out.

BEE

(*Temptingly*)

Do you *Wish* to know them all,  
Now all at once, the great and small,  
Without study or trouble or time,  
It is Wishing Moon, you know. Maybe  
If you should ask a Fairy — like me —?

BELLE

Oh, no, no, no! I would rather wait and find out for myself. Things are so much nicer that you get or earn, or learn, or make yourself.

DUET (BELLE and BEE)

BELLE

I don't wish any Wish, please, not I.  
I'd rather fish for my fish, please, or at least try.

The nicest things are those you learn,  
And all by yourself the things you learn,  
Oh, my!

Just wait till I grow,  
Such wonderful things I mean to know!

BEE

You don't need any wish, Child, not you!  
Just help yourself from the dish, Child, that is  
quite true.

The nicest things are those you make,  
Or go and find, and from Nature take.  
So do!

I'll watch while you grow,  
And you will be happy and wise, I know.

BEE

I hope the Children are listening. Zee!

BELLE

The poor children! I almost forgot them.  
I Wish ——

BEE

Careful, careful, Belle! If you do Wish, oh,  
Wish well.

Remember the woman who carelessly chose  
The pudding to land on the end of her nose.

BELLE

Careful is what I want to be.

I wish for something *undone*: but not for  
me.

I Wish you would set the children free.

BEE

Ah, kind little girl! Your Wish is granted,  
Because a sweet, unselfish thing you wanted.  
Come, dance a little charm with me,  
And we will set the silly children free.

DANCE

*(As Belle and Bee dance, the children come  
to life, and finally join in the dance.  
Exit Bee, humming.)*

KAYE

Am I dreaming, or is it true?

Belle was dancing with a Fairy. Belle, is it  
you?

BELLE

I think it was a Fairy, but it might have been  
a Bee,

You cannot trap a Fairy, now you see.

KAYE

If you are the Fairies' friend, I wish —

## BELLE

Be careful of your wishes, Kaye!  
Let us all be friends of the Fairies, from this  
day,  
Let us all make friends of Nature,  
And of each little living creature.

## CHILDREN

You must show us how, Belle.

## BELLE

We will all learn together, and though we may  
not see,  
The Fairies may be around us, under bush  
and tree,  
All among the flowers, all amid the grass,  
Loving us, protecting us, as we pass.  
*(Enter Sprites, dancing in a great circle around  
the Children, who do not see them.)*

## CHORUS (CHILDREN)

We will put our traps away,  
In the hollow tree,  
Nevermore to catch a Fay,  
We will leave her free.  
We will never even try  
On the Fairy's sleep to spy  
We will let them be.

But the secrets that they know,  
We will try to learn.  
Then perhaps they will not go,  
Maybe they'll return.  
And our Wishes will come true,  
When we wish as Fairies do,  
And try our Wish to earn.

KAYE

I do not see anything, Belle. But I feel as  
if the Fairies were all around us.

BELLE

You may be sure they are all around us.

FAIRIES

*(Very softly)*

All around! All around!

END



# THE LITTLE SHADOWS

A CHRISTMAS PLAYLET





# THE LITTLE SHADOWS

## CHARACTERS

TOM, *aged eight*

DOTTIE, *aged six*

TOM'S SHADOW

DOTTIE'S SHADOW

MAMMA

SCENE: *It is bedtime, three days before Christmas, in a comfortable nursery. A fire burns in the grate, with a rocking-chair beside it. Two little beds stand foot to foot at the stage back, in front of the practicable window at the centre. A door leads off, L., to another chamber. A screen stands at the back near the window; a table, R.; simple furniture, pretty colored prints on the walls. Many toys are scattered carelessly about; a rocking-horse, a doll carriage, several dolls, a tea-set, games, etc. The covers of the beds have been turned back, and when the curtain rises Tom and Dottie are discovered, one kneeling in front of each bed, silently saying their prayers, back to the audience. Tom is in pa-*

*jamas; Dottie in long white nightdress, her hair tied with a colored ribbon.*

*After the curtain rises, they remain for some seconds in this attitude, then they scramble to their feet, and Tom leaps into his bed with a shout.*

TOM

Whoop!

DOTTIE

*(Hesitating)*

If I jump right in, Tom, I don't see how it can jump before me.

TOM

What, you Goosie?

DOTTIE

Why, the Little Shadow that Mamma sings about.

TOM

Pooh! Who's afraid of a Shadow? Baby!

DOTTIE

I'm not afraid!

TOM

Yes, you are! 'Fraid cat!

*(He fires a pillow at Dot, who promptly returns it. A fierce pillow-fight ensues,*

*between the two beds, the children growing more and more noisy and excited, laughing merrily. In the midst of the fun Mamma is heard calling from the other room.)*

MAMMA

Children! Children! What is all this noise? Aren't you in bed yet, you bad youngsters?

CHILDREN

*(Hurriedly creeping under the bedclothes)*

Yes, Mamma!

*(Enter Mamma, L., with a lighted candle which she stands upon the table.)*

MAMMA

Well, what has been going on? Another pillow fight! You naughty children, your beds look like snow-drifts after Tom's shoveling. *(She smooths out the counterpanes, bending over and kissing each child.)* Did you say your prayers nicely, both of you?

CHILDREN

Yes, Mamma.

DOT

I asked for lots of new toys at Christmas.

TOM

So did I — lots and lots of them.

MAMMA

Oh, you hardly need them, you have so many now. But we shall see. Now I will say good-night and put out the light.

DOT

Oh, Mamma, please sing to us first.

MAMMA

Well, what shall I sing, Dearie?

DOT

Sing the song of the Little Shadow.

MAMMA

Your favorite song. Well, here it is. (*Sits. She draws the rocking-chair forward beside Dot's bed and sings as she rocks back and forth Stevenson's 'My Shadow.'*)

I have a little Shadow that goes in and out with me,  
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.  
He is very, very like me from his heels up to his head,  
And I see him jump before me when I jump into my bed.

DOT

(*After a pause*)

Mamma, do you suppose It did jump into bed before me? I forgot to look.

MAMMA

What, Darling?

DOT

My little Shadow 'that goes in and out with me.'

MAMMA

*(Rising)*

Nonsense, Dottie! There is nothing in your bed but your little self. And even if a Shadow had hopped in there you wouldn't mind, would you? — Just a nice little thin Shadow?

DOT

*(Doubtfully)*

I don't know. It might be cold, like a toad.

TOM

Pooh! Shadows aren't anything, are they, Mamma?

MAMMA

No, dear; no, indeed.

DOT

But they must be *something* or we couldn't see them. What are they made of, Mamma?

MAMMA

They are, why, they are made of nothing

but air, Dottie. They are only spots where the light doesn't strike, Dearie.

DOT

'Spots where the light doesn't strike!' Then what becomes of them in the dark? Mamma, there must be millions and millions of Shadows. They must be everywhere. Everything must be a Shadow. Mamma, I must be a Shadow in the dark — and you, and Tom!

MAMMA

*(Pushing her down)*

Hush, Dearie! You mustn't fancy such things. The Shadows go out when the light does, I am sure. There is just kind darkness everywhere, and nothing for good people to fear.

*(Goes to table.)*

DOT

Where is my Shadow now, Mamma? Maybe it is under the bed, Mamma; won't you please look?

MAMMA

*(Laughing)*

Yes, I will look. *(She lifts up the valances and looks under both beds.)* You see, there is



nothing there. Now you must go to sleep,  
for it is growing late.

*(She opens the window and sets the screen  
before it, takes up candle and kisses the  
children good-night.)*

MAMMA

Good-night, Tom! Good-night, Dottie,  
Darlings.

CHILDREN

Good-night, Mamma.

*(Exit Mamma, L. The room is darkened,  
lighted only by the firelight.)*

DOT

Tom, aren't you glad it is only three days  
to Christmas?

TOM

You bet! *(Sleepily.)* Let's go to sleep  
quick, Dot, so the time will go faster.

DOT

All right, Tom. Good-night!

TOM

*(Drowsily)*

'Night!

*(There is silence in the room for some*

*minutes, the children breathing heavily and turning over, then settling to sleep with faces towards the audience and eyes closed. Presently the Little Shadows of Tom and Dottie steal out, each from under a bed. They have entered by the window, and from behind the screen have crept unseen to their places. In size and shape they resemble the children as closely as possible. Tom's Shadow is clothed in black pajamas, Dottie's in a black nightdress, her hair tied with a black ribbon. Both have blackened hands and black stockinged feet; they wear black wigs, in shape as much as possible like the heads of the children. Their faces are blackened, or covered with black masks which hide all but their eyes. Their movements are very stealthy and their tread motionless. They come forward with queer little jerky motions, peering about the room over their shoulders, with finger on lip, as if afraid of being discovered. They steal up and look at the sleeping children, then reassured, make a gesture of triumph, hop*

*up in the air and down to the stage front.*

*They do a Shadow Dance, grotesque and nimble, to music behind the scene. (Delibes' 'Pizzicati' from 'Sylvia.') At the end of the dance they glide about the room in opposite directions, peering into the corners, examining the furniture, looking at the pictures in an elfish way. Finally Tom's Shadow finds the rocking-horse, upon which he pounces, drags it to the front of the stage, and bestrides it, rocking and laughing silently. Dottie's Shadow in the same way finds the doll and sits down on the floor hugging and playing with it. They talk to one another in dumb show. After some minutes there is a sigh from the bed, Dottie wakes, rubs her eyes, and sits up in bed among the pillows, staring open-mouthed.)*

DOT

Well, I never. Who's playing with my doll?

TOM

*(Waking and sitting up)*

Who's on my rocking-horse, I'd like to know?

*(The Shadows stiffen and are perfectly quiet, as if petrified.)*

DOT

What are they, Tom? Oh, what are they? See that one with the black ribbon. It almost seems as if I had seen something like her before. What does it all mean? Are we dreaming, Tom?

TOM

Dreaming? No, indeed! I am wide awake. I have been pinching myself, and I am wide awake. I am going to speak with them. Hello! Who are you?

*(Both Shadows immediately begin to rock and play once more. Tom's Shadow calls back carelessly over his shoulder.)*

TOM'S SHADOW

Hello, yourself! Whoop! Thank you! Now I can talk and make a noise like any real boy.  
*(He rocks violently snapping the whip.)*

DOT

Why, what has happened? Why do you say 'Thank you'? You black girl, can't you speak?

DOT'S SHADOW

Yes, *now* I can. Thank you! Now the charm is broken and we can both talk, for you spoke to us first. Dear little Dollie (*talking to the doll*), how I do love you! Oh, isn't it good to talk at last? Now I can say to you all the nice things I have longed to say for so many, many nights.

DOT

Stop! That is my doll. What right have you to play with her unless I let you?

DOT'S SHADOW

I have the right. I can play with her all night long, just as I do whenever you are in bed!

TOM

I say! Get off that rocking-horse, will you? I am afraid you will break it, you black imp.

TOM'S SHADOW

Break it! You are mighty careful all of a sudden, seems to me! Never knew you to be

careful before. You are always knocking and banging it — just see the scratches and bruises on it. It makes me ache every day to see you, when I can't help it. But now I can ride myself, all I wish — just as I do every night as soon as it is dark!

TOM

Every night as soon as it is dark!

TOM'S SHADOW

Yes, Sir! And you cannot prevent it, you selfish little boy!

TOM

Why, who are you, anyway?

BOTH SHADOWS

*(Jumping up and bowing grotesquely)*

We are your little Shadows!

TOM'S SHADOW

All day long we have to do only just what you make us do — such stupid things! But at night when it is dark, we are free, free to do as we please. We can play with your toys now, and you cannot help it.

DOT'S SHADOW

All day long we have to follow you wherever you go, and we can't do anything by our-

selves. But now it is night and we can play as we like. And since you have spoken to us of your own accord we are not dumb any more. You have given us speech, thank you! Oh, I like to play with this lovely doll and talk to her. Now I am going to have a party with that pretty tea-set over there.

*(She runs over to the tea-set and begins setting it in place, still clasping the doll in her arms.)*

DOT

I want my doll! Give her to me!

*(She starts to get out of bed.)*

DOT'S SHADOW

You had better stay where you are, I warn you! Something may happen if you get out of bed to-night.

TOM

I want my rocking-horse.

*(He stands on the bed ready to jump out.)*

TOM'S SHADOW

You had better not get up, I warn you! This is our time to-night. Do you want to have all the fun all the time? Can't you let us enjoy ourselves for a little while, when you



have been doing just as you please all day long?

TOM

It is my horse! You can't have it. I want to play with it myself.

*(He jumps to the floor.)*

DOT

I want my doll. Give her to me this minute. I am going to have a tea-party myself.

*(She hops out of bed. As the children touch the floor they stiffen into queer attitudes of surprise and so remain. The Little Shadows jump up and down clapping their hands noiselessly. They dance about the children with finger on lip while the children remain rigid and mute.)*

SHADOWS

They got out of bed! They got out of bed!  
The charm is working! They are dumb!  
They are dumb!

TOM'S SHADOW

They won't let us play with their toys, even at night, won't they? Well, Sister, we will teach them something, the selfish children!

## DOT'S SHADOW

Yes, oh, yes! They don't care who is happy besides themselves. They want to keep everything, do they? But we will teach them. Say the word, Brother.

## TOM'S SHADOW

Yes, I will speak to Tom, and you to Dottie. Then they must be *our* Shadows for the rest of the night. Then they will see how pleasant it is to do only what some one else lets you. Now, then, Boy! Do as I do!

*(He dances. Tom begins to dance, imitating Tom's Shadow, who dances madly, till Tom pants with fatigue. Through the rest of this scene he imitates his every motion, but empty-handed, the actions of the Shadow Boy. Tom's Shadow rocks on the horse. Tom rocks in the air, etc.)*

## DOT'S SHADOW

Now, then, Girl! Do as I do, dance!

*(Dot unbends, then dances as the other three do. At last, exhausted, she falls down on the floor beside Dot's Shadow and throughout the rest of the scene imitates her motions exactly. They make tea with the tea-set, Dot using dumb show in air.)*

## TOM'S SHADOW

*(To Tom)*

You would like to rock on the real horse, wouldn't you? Well, you can't. But you must rock just the same on nothing. How do you like that? That is what I have to do every day, when you are enjoying yourself. *(He rocks faster and faster, Tom stooping and imitating him, looking very foolish.)* Whoop la! Hello! Here we go! What fun it is to have a fine horse and keep him all to yourself. Hello, here's a battledore and shuttlecock. *(Takes it up and begins to toss the cock up and down.)* Wouldn't you like to play with it, Boy? *(Nods his head; Tom nods also.)* Well, you can't! Do you remember the other day in the Park you were playing and I was behind you hopping foolishly when that little boy came up and watched you? How he wished he could try, just once. Did you let him? No indeed! You have lots of toys here at home, and you might have given him this one. But you didn't, not you! Now you know how that poor little chap felt.

*(Tom's Shadow goes to back of stage tossing the cock, Tom following, tossing nothing.)*

## DOT'S SHADOW

*(Coming forward with doll and placing her in carriage, Dot imitating behind her)*

Now I shall take Vanessa for a ride. *(Dot makes a face.)* Oh, you don't like that name? Well, I do, and that is going to be her name to-night. Oh, you want to dress her and put on her bonnet, do you? I suppose you think you can do it better than I can. That is what the poor little girl thought yesterday when she watched you so eagerly on the sidewalk. She hadn't any doll, and you have six, seven, eight! But you never thought of giving her one, did you? You would not even let her touch your precious dollie. Well, now you know how she felt. You can't touch my Vanessa, you can only pretend. And that is what a lot of little girls, as good as you, have to do every day of their lives. Yes, indeed! Now, Vanessa, we will go for a walk.

*(She pushes the carriage about the stage, Dot following, pushing the air.)*

## TOM'S SHADOW

*(Shaking up a bag of marbles)*

I say, Sister, let's have a game of marbles.

## DOT'S SHADOW

All right, Brother.

*(She leaves the carriage, and they begin to play marbles on the floor, front, Dot and Tom behind them playing empty-handed.)*

## TOM'S SHADOW

*(Nodding his head)*

I suppose you would like to play too? *(Tom nods eagerly.)* Well, you can't! Yesterday you kept a boy out of the marble game because he wasn't as well dressed as you. Well, to-night we won't play with you because we don't like your colors. We like black things.

## DOT'S SHADOW

*(Shaking her head at Dot)*

It's too bad you can't play with us. But you can't, can you?

*(Dot shakes her head sadly.)*

## TOM'S SHADOW

It isn't much fun just to pretend, is it?

## DOT'S SHADOW

And think how many children have to pretend all the time!

## TOM'S SHADOW

You have everything you want. And when you lose your marbles or when your toys get banged and broken, you get new ones. You don't have to be careful, do you?

*(Shakes his head; others shake also.)*

## DOT'S SHADOW

Christmas comes in three days, and then you will have a lot of new toys to spoil. What will become of the old ones? I suppose you don't care? *(Shakes her head; others shake.)*

## TOM'S SHADOW

You won't give them away to some poorer children? Of course not! *(All shake.)*

## DOT'S SHADOW

You won't remember Christmas for any one else, oh, no! It is just made for you to get things. That must have been a mistake, about its being more blessed to give than to receive. Oh, but if I were a real child, how I should love to give the new toys away to some little poor girl! But I am only a little shadow, and I can't do anything.

## TOM'S SHADOW

*(To Tom)*

You haven't planned to do anything, have you? *(Both shake.)*

## SHADOWS

*(Pointing at the children in disgust)*

Little pigs!

## TOM'S SHADOW

I am glad we are only Shadows, Sister! We might be like that if we were real. Come, now, let's play something lively. Let's play tag.

## DOT'S SHADOW

All right!

*(They begin to play merrily, chasing about the stage on light feet. Tom and Dot imitate them clumsily and blindly. In doing so they knock over the rocking-horse and doll carriage, upsetting the toys noisily. The Little Shadows stop with finger on lips, pointing at them scornfully.)*

## DOT'S SHADOW

Clumsy!



## TOM'S SHADOW

What a noise! You will wake up the whole house.

*(There is a sound of footsteps approaching, and Mamma's voice calls outside.)*

## MAMMA

Children! Children!

*(All four stand still. The Little Shadows stiffen, put their fingers on their lips. As the light of Mamma's candle shines into the room, Tom and Dot rub their eyes and stagger dizzily towards their beds. At the same time the Little Shadows dart before them under the beds and disappear. Tom and Dot sit down on the beds, drawing up their feet. Enter Mamma, L., with a lighted candle.)*

## MAMMA

What is all this noise? What are you children doing?

## TOM

Look under the bed, Mamma! They crept under the bed. I saw them go.

## DOT

Mamma! Mamma! The Little Shadows!

MAMMA

What are you talking about? Little Shadows can't make such a noise as I heard. Either you are telling me a story or you must have had a nightmare. Look at these toys!

CHILDREN

It *was* the Little Shadows! Please look under the bed, Mamma!

MAMMA

*(Looking under the bed)*

You see there is nothing here. No one at all.

DOT

They were black, Mamma; and they danced and played with our toys. And they said things. Oh, Mamma! They said such horrid things to us!

TOM

We couldn't play ourselves, Mamma. We could only pretend to do just what they did. It was awful, Mamma!

MAMMA

You had the nightmare, both of you at the same time. How queer that is! You got too excited over that pillow fight.

DOT

Mamma! I have thought of something. I don't want any new presents for Christmas. I want to give them all to the little poor children. I love my old dollie, I don't want another.

TOM

Yes, Mamma. Our old toys are good enough. Why, they are fine! And won't you let us play Santa Claus ourselves this year? I think that would be fun.

DOT

Santa Claus for the little poor children! Oh, Tom! How lovely! The Little Shadows will be so pleased!

MAMMA

The Little Shadows again! My Dearies, is this what the Little Shadows have taught you? Perhaps they were little angels, after all.

DOT

Oh, no, Mamma. They were black; black as could be!

MAMMA

Sometimes angels look black, Dearie. Yes that is a lovely idea. ABOUT Santa Claus.

We will talk it over to-morrow and plan what YOU SHALL DO FOR THE LITTLE POOR CHILDREN. But now you must go to sleep, for it is very late. The Little Shadows will not come back TO-NIGHT, I know. But I will leave the candle on the table. Good-night, Darlings, and pleasant dreams to you.

CHILDREN

Good-night, Mamma.

*(Mamma bends over and kisses them good-night.)*

CURTAIN









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# THE LONESOMEST DOLL

*By Abbie Farwell Brown*

*Pictures by Arthur Rackham*

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THERE is no more famous illustrator of children's books in the entire world than Arthur Rackham. Indeed, there are many people who make a point of buying every Rackham book regardless of subject, merely for the sake of the pictures. For, unlike that of many illustrators, Mr. Rackham's work appeals equally to the child and the adult, delighting the young reader by its whimsical humor and multitude of perfectly executed details, and adults by its beauty and artistry.

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Miss Brown's charming story of the proud little queen and her beautiful lonesome doll has held a place for many years among the favorite books of the younger readers, and this new and beautiful edition should make it many new friends.

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